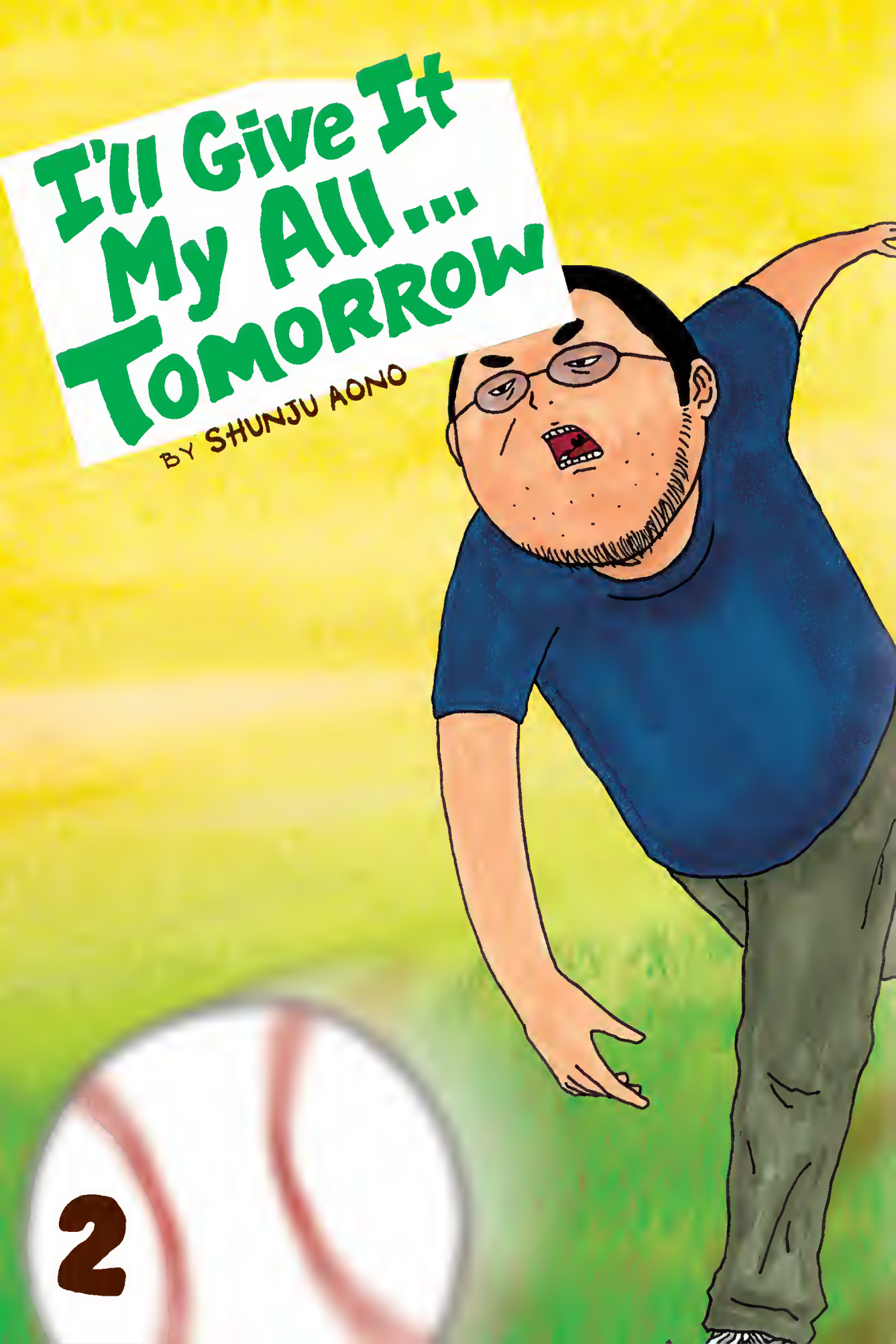
I'll Give It My All... Tomorrow

BY SHUNJU AONO



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2

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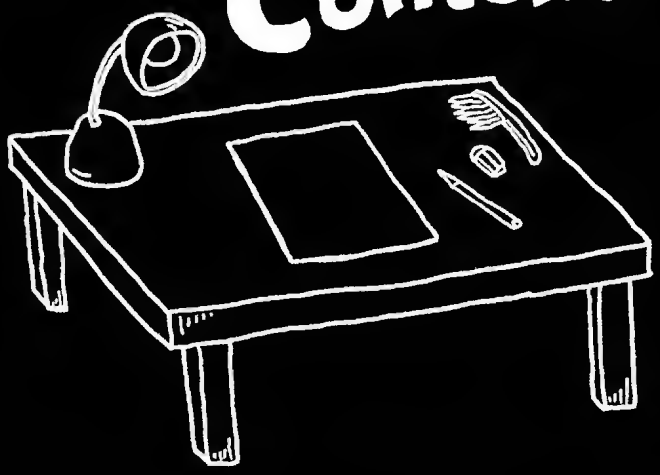

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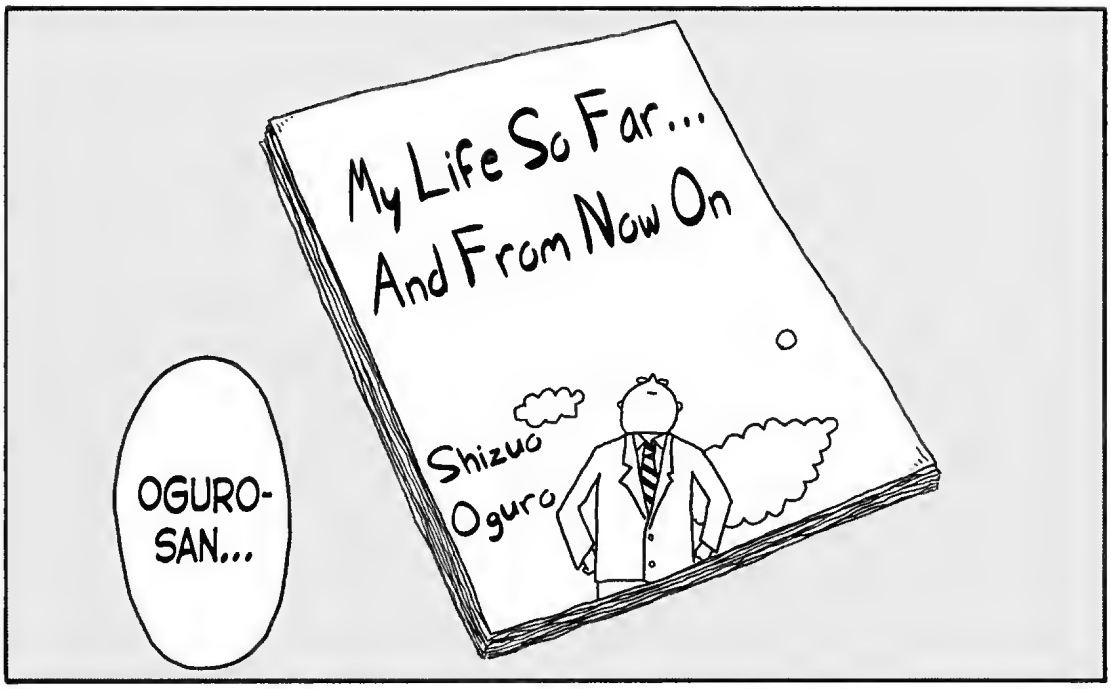
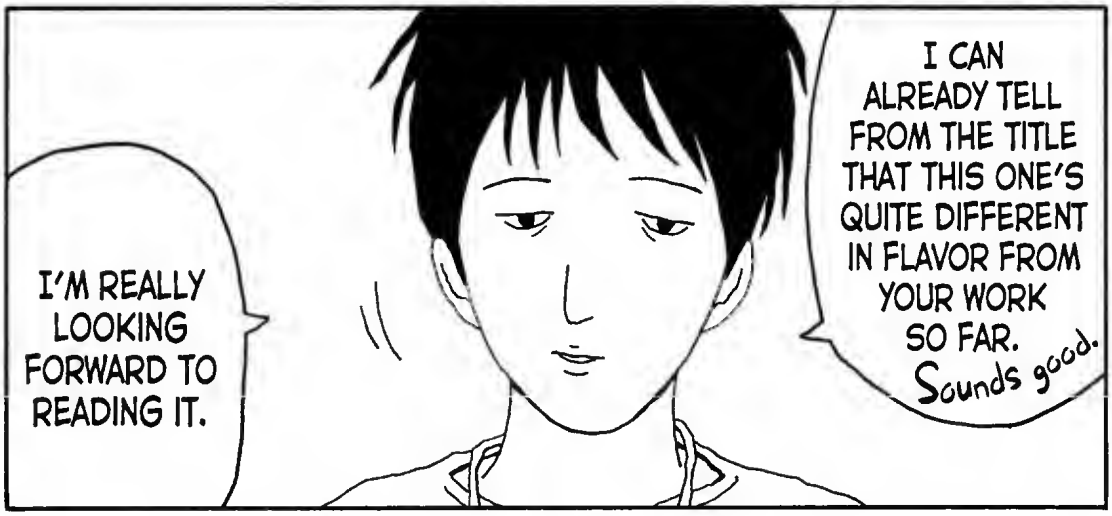
Chapter 5:
Miracle


My Life So Far... And From Now On
Shizuo Oguro
OGURO-SAN...


I'M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD TO READING IT.
I CAN ALREADY TELL FROM THE TITLE THAT THIS ONE'S QUITE DIFFERENT IN FLAVOR FROM YOUR WORK SO FAR.
Sounds good.

dip
...
Home Run

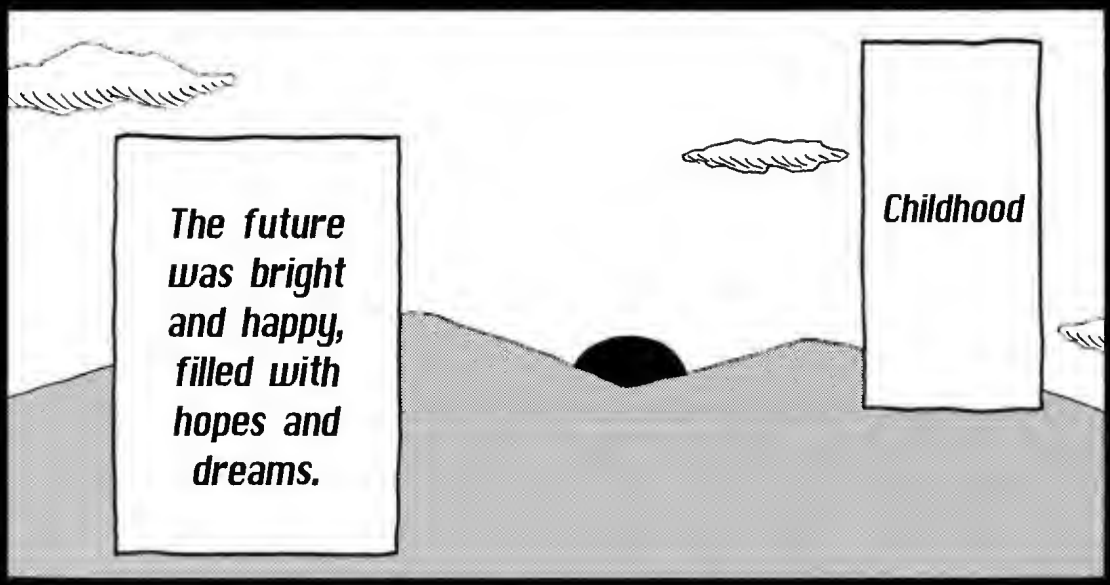
...
HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED SOME KIND OF BIG CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE?
AND IT SEEMS TO ME THERE'S SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU YOURSELF TODAY. ISN'T THERE?
Home Run

WELL, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
I'D LIKE TO START READING IT RIGHT AWAY. IS THAT OKAY?
EKKE
Murakami

nod
YES...
Home Run

...

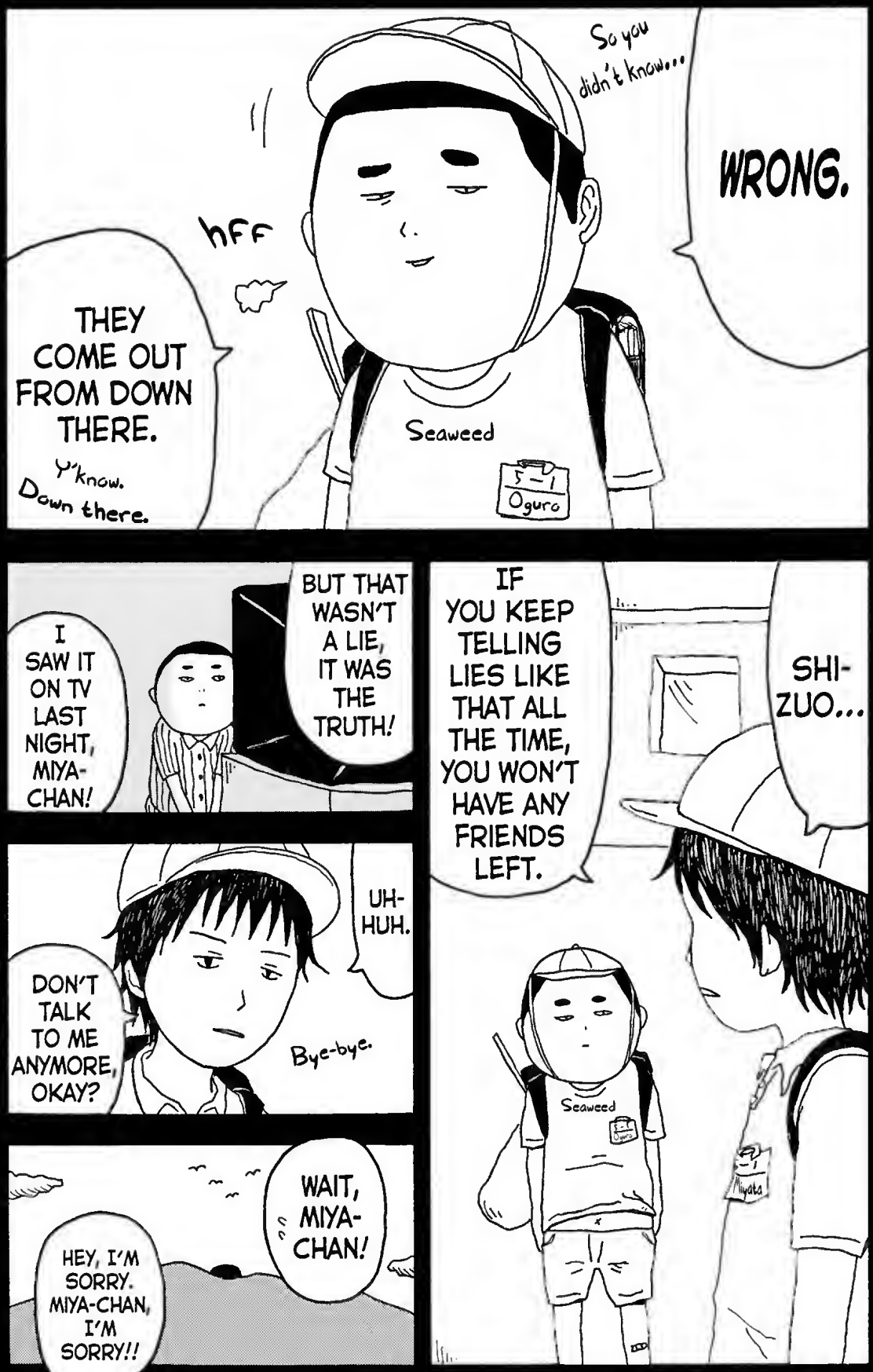
GREAT...
PLEASE...
shwa
Home Run
Life So Far...
From Now On


The future was bright and happy, filled with hopes and dreams.
Childhood

?
HEY, MIYA-CHAN. DID YOU KNOW?

FROM THEIR MOMMIES' BELLIES.
...

GUESS WHERE BABIES COME OUT FROM.
...


So you didn't know...
WRONG.
hff
THEY COME OUT FROM DOWN THERE.
Y'know. Down there.
Seaweed
Oguro
I SAW IT ON TV LAST NIGHT, MIYA-CHAN!
BUT THAT WASN'T A LIE, IT WAS THE TRUTH!
IF YOU KEEP TELLING LIES LIKE THAT ALL THE TIME, YOU WON'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS LEFT.
SHI-ZUO...
UH-HUH.
DON'T TALK TO ME ANYMORE, OKAY?
Bye-bye.
Seaweed
Miyata
WAIT, MIYA-CHAN!
HEY, I'M SORRY. MIYA-CHAN, I'M SORRY!!

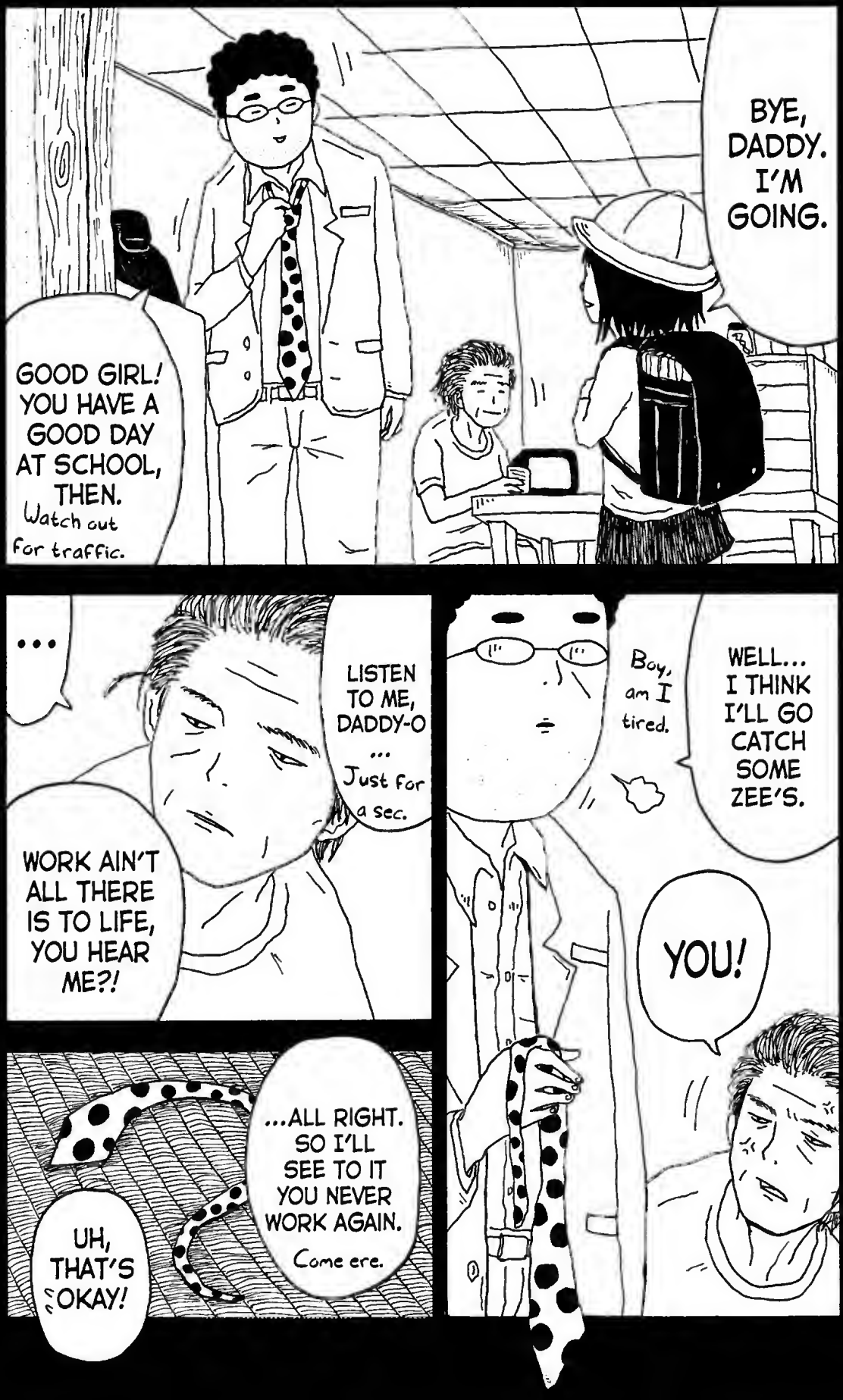
puff
puff
Age 17
I was still a main character on the stage that is life.
Not inhaling
Curse
FEH!
pah
Curse
HOW ABOUT JUST SITTING LIKE A NORMAL PERSON, SHIZUO?
Huh?
Curse
HEY!

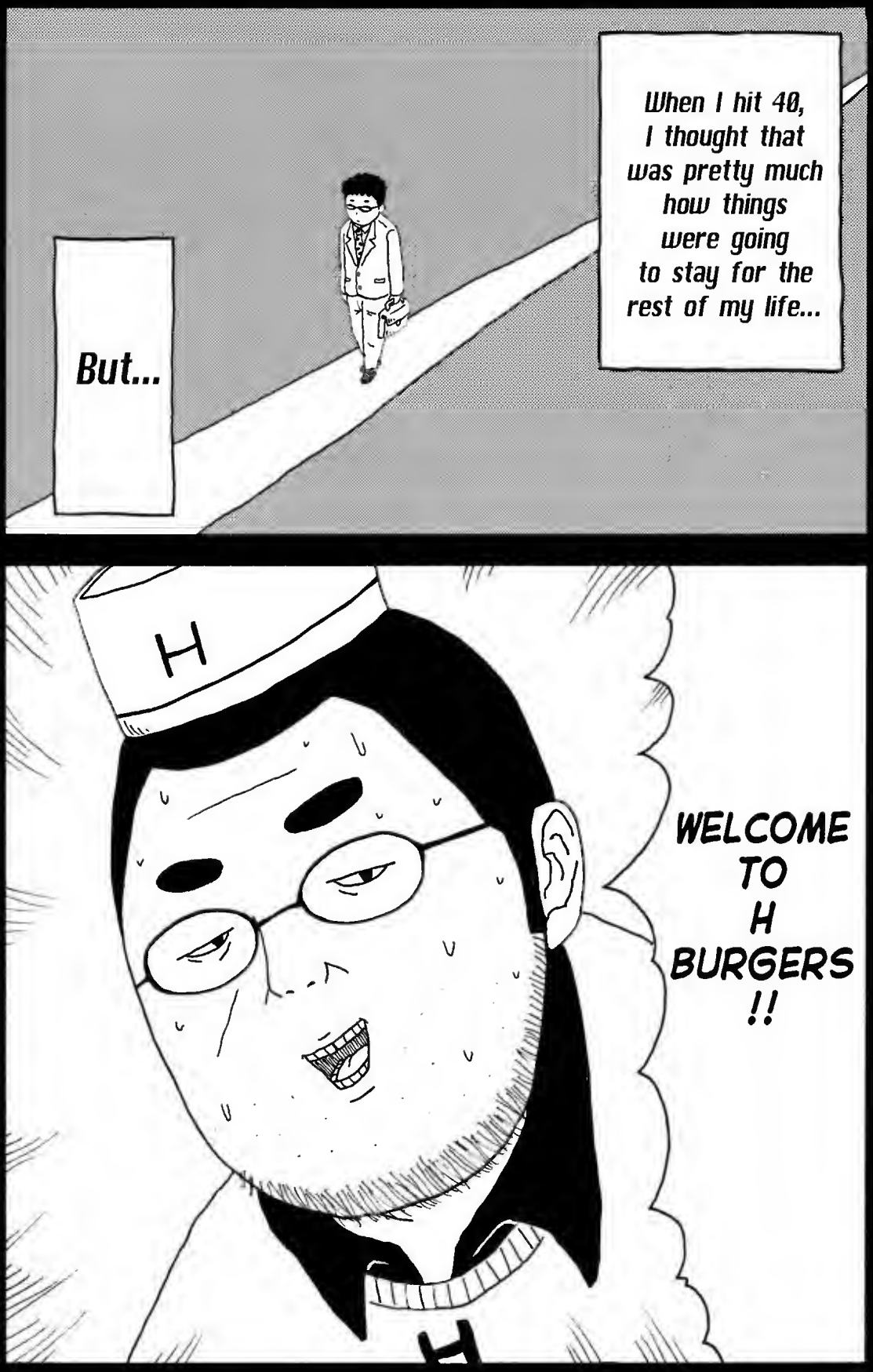
HUH?
Who, me?
WHAT SCHOOL YOU GO TO?
...
YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING CUTE?
LET'S GO FOR A WALK...
...
MOVE IT, ASSHOLE.
zwok
...
...

MIYATA ...
HM?
TOTAL DISASTER?
...
I HAVE A FEELING I'M DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE.
HOW?
...
THANKS ...
I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW, BUT I AM...
OKAY...
IF I EVER GET FAMOUS, DON'T WORRY, I'LL STILL BE FRIENDS WITH YOU.

Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Age 22
I was searching for my path in life.
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
...
...
GET A JOB. First of all.
Pi-ck
...
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck
Pi-ck

YES...
I learned to prioritize my present reality over distant dreams and ideals.
Age 32
...
chak
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T LEAVE HER ALONE AT HOME WHEN SHE'S... THAT'S RIGHT. YES, I THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO GO IN TOMORROW.
MY DAUGHTER WOKE UP THIS MORNING WITH A REALLY HIGH FEVER, SO... YES.
2-3
Oguro


BYE, DADDY. I'M GOING.
GOOD GIRL! YOU HAVE A GOOD DAY AT SCHOOL, THEN.
Watch out for traffic.
WELL... I THINK I'LL GO CATCH SOME ZEE'S.
Boy, am I tired.
YOU!
...
LISTEN TO ME, DADDY-O ... Just for a sec.
WORK AIN'T ALL THERE IS TO LIFE, YOU HEAR ME?!
...ALL RIGHT. SO I'LL SEE TO IT YOU NEVER WORK AGAIN.
Come ere.
UH, THAT'S OKAY!


When I hit 40, I thought that was pretty much how things were going to stay for the rest of my life...
But...
H
WELCOME TO H BURGERS !!

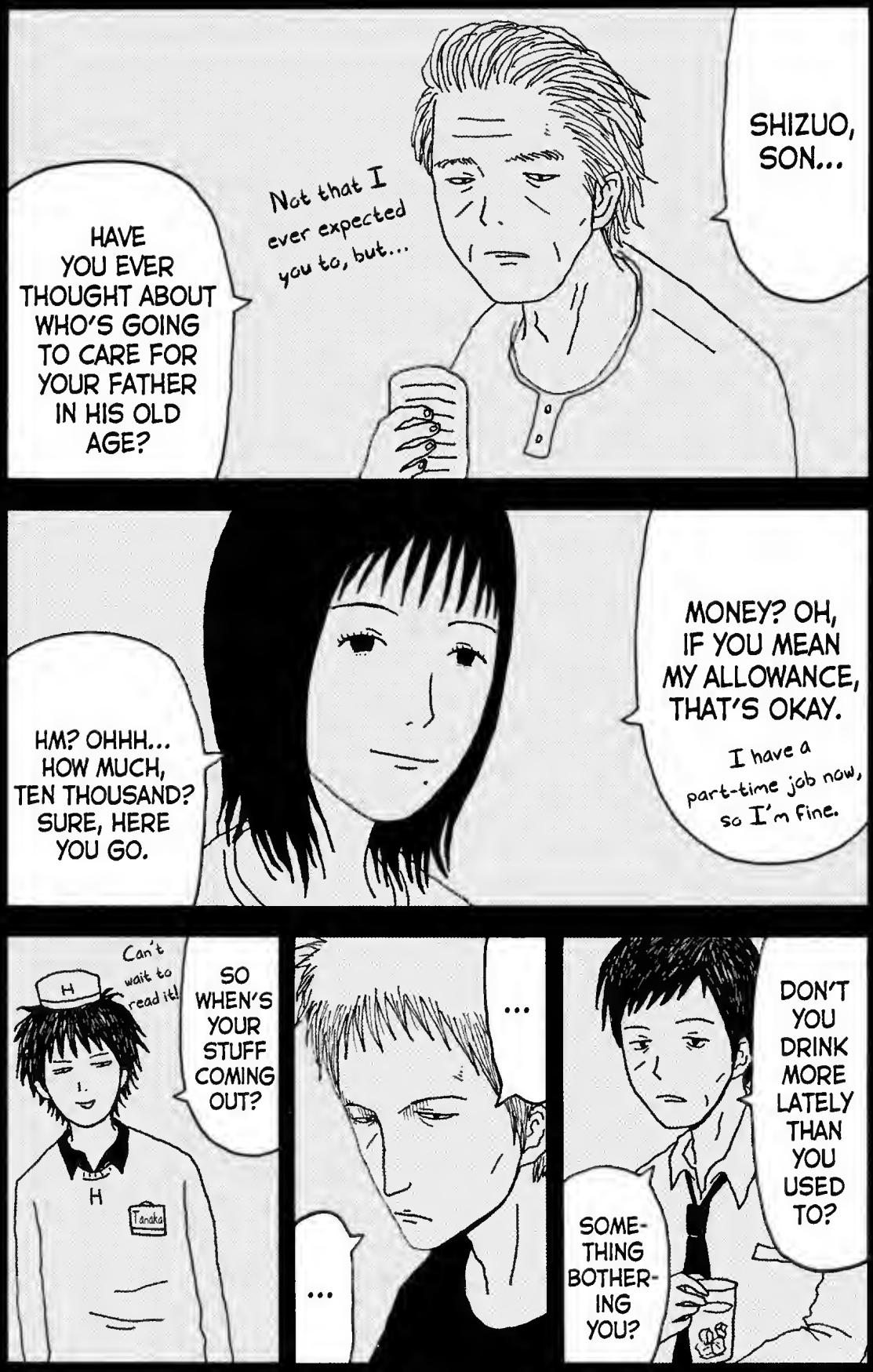
RIGHT HERE!
What is it?
HEY, MANAGER*. (*NICK-NAME.)
WELCOME!! HOW CAN I HELP YOU?
Shak shak
Loudmouth.
SO, DID YOU BRING ANY?
BRING ANY WHAT?
Tanaka
Welcome to H Burgers!
WHAAAT? BUT I ASKED YOU TO BRING SOME TO SHOW ME TODAY.
WELL, I DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE THEM...
On Sale 100
NO, I DIDN'T...
ANY OF YOUR MANGA, MANAGER*! (*NICKNAME.) YOUR CREATIONS!
H Burgers
Now Hiring
TANAKA ...
YOU ARE THE ONE PERSON I DON'T WANT READING MY STUFF.
No matter what.
...
Why not?
I'm a real connoisseur!
YOU GOTTA *WANT* PEOPLE TO SEE THEM! DON'T BE SHY, DUDE.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?! YOU'RE TRYING TO GET PUBLISHED, RIGHT?!

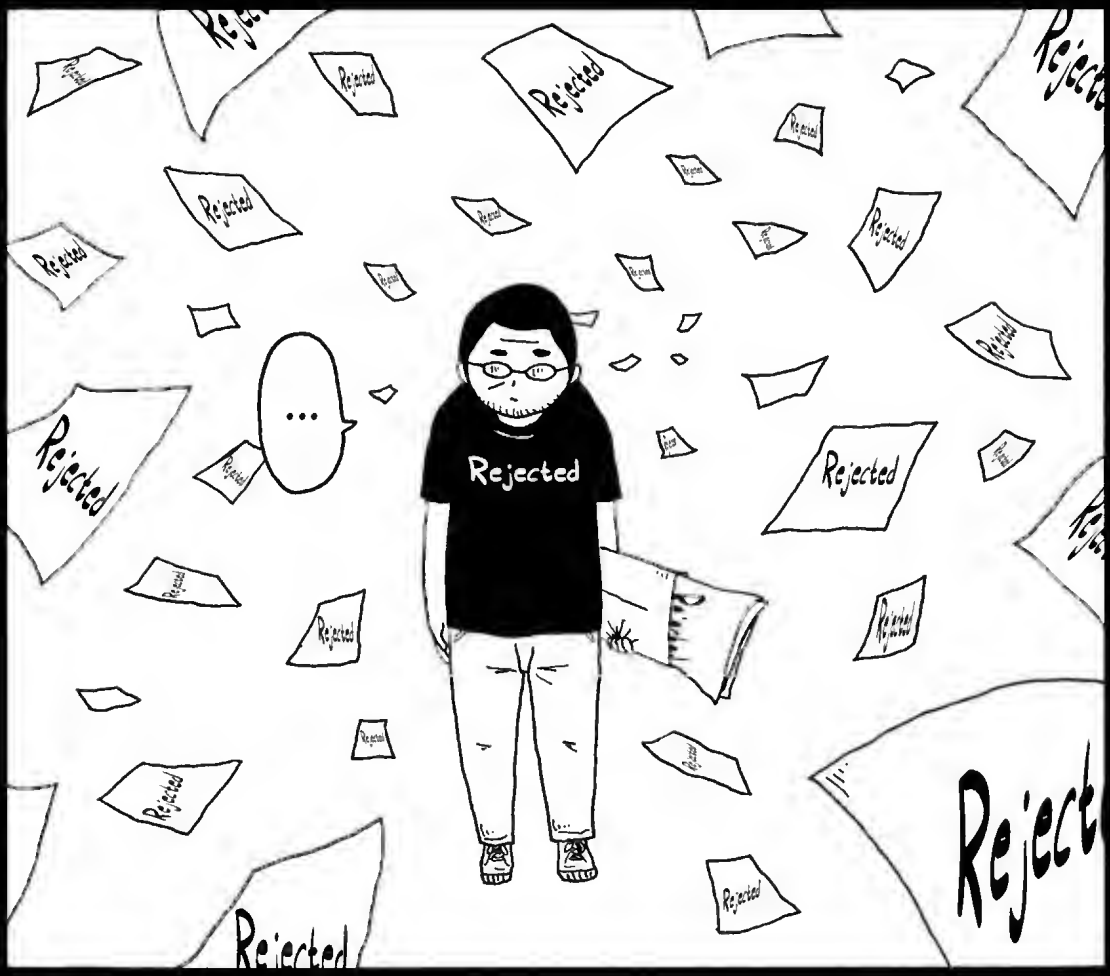
I thought...
A
I know it was a selfish thing to do...
...I'd like to give myself another chance. Believe in myself again.
But still, I...
KRACH
Hijiki
KRACH
And I know that dreams and ideals don't put food on the table...

Hijiki is a type of seaweed.

...I just didn't want to make excuses for myself anymore.
Hijiki

KRACH
KRACH
KRACH
KRACH
KRACH
GREAT TALENTS BLOOM LATE!
GREAT TALENTS BLOOM LATE!


SHIZUO, SON...
Not that I ever expected you to, but...
HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT WHO'S GOING TO CARE FOR YOUR FATHER IN HIS OLD AGE?
MONEY? OH, IF YOU MEAN MY ALLOWANCE, THAT'S OKAY.
I have a part-time job now, so I'm fine.
HM? OHHH... HOW MUCH, TEN THOUSAND? SURE, HERE YOU GO.
SO WHEN'S YOUR STUFF COMING OUT?
Can't wait to read it!
H
Tanaka
...
...
DON'T YOU DRINK MORE LATELY THAN YOU USED TO?
SOME-THING BOTHER-ING YOU?


Rejected
...
Rejected
Rejected
Rejected

I finally figured it out– I just haven't had the right subject matter so far.

SO GET PUBLISHED.

WOOOOOOH!!

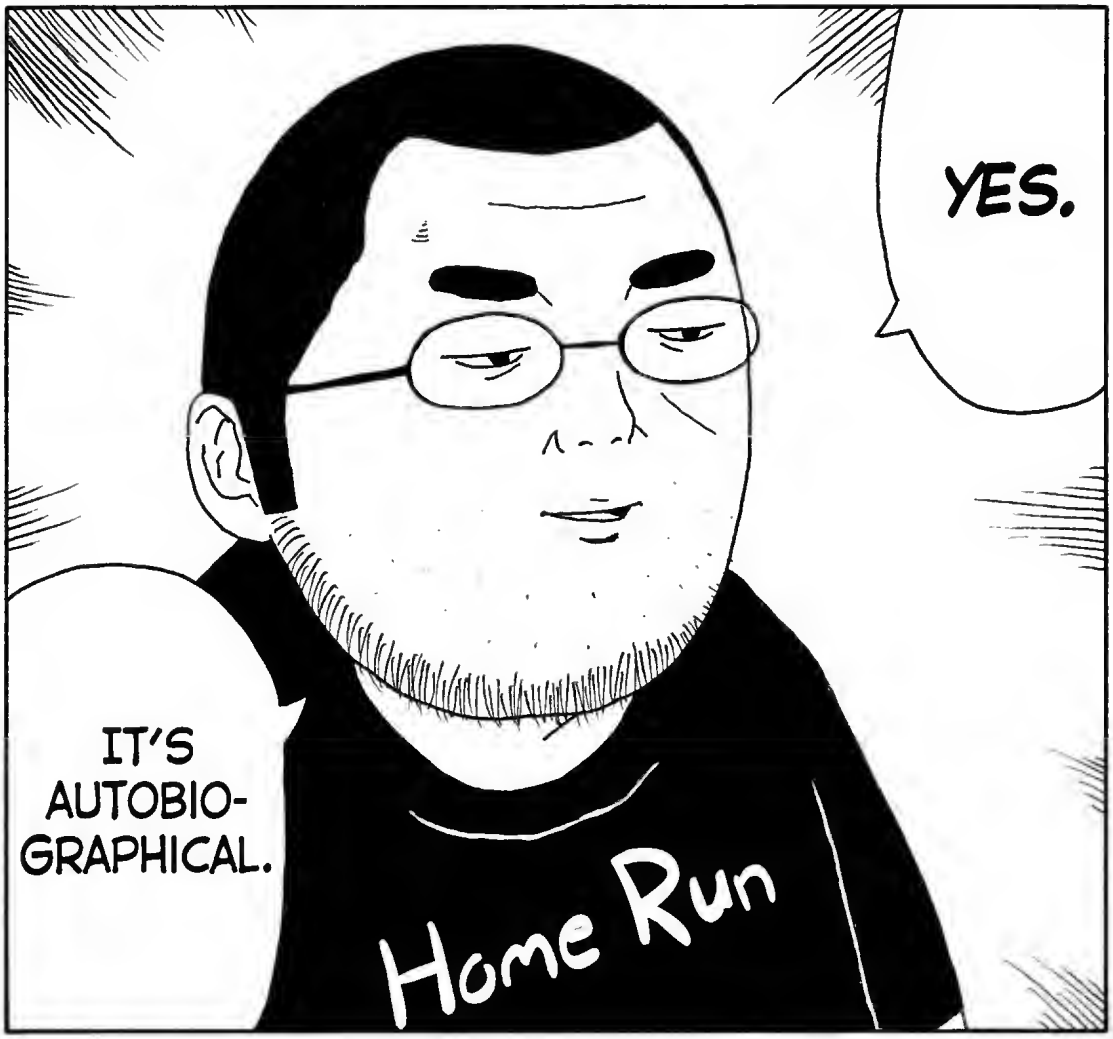
I'd put a lot of effort (read: materialistic desires) into my work...

...but what had been missing was the most important thing of all– heart...

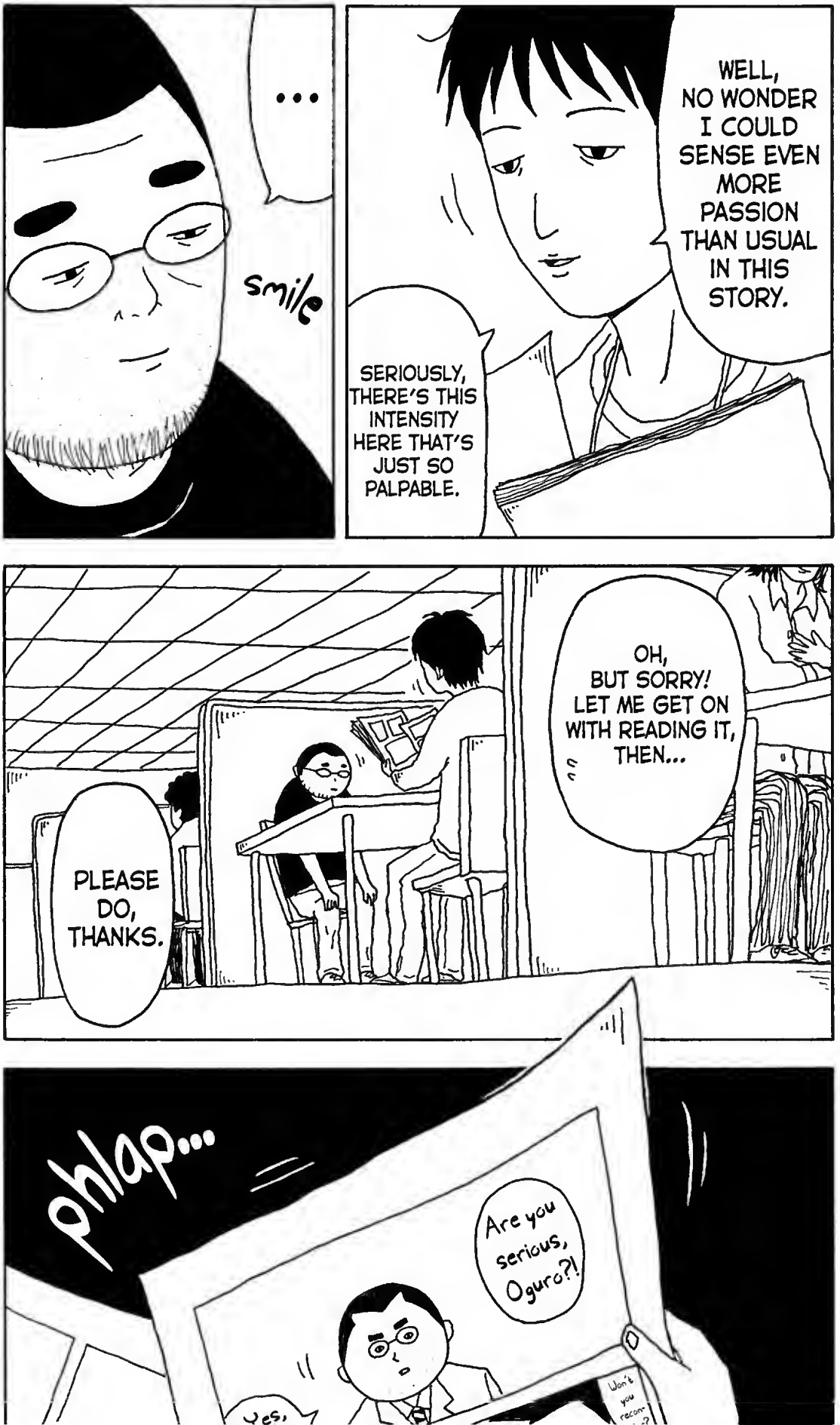
Respect
Money
Honor
Building
Money
Sensei
Fame
Ogura Productions
Woner
Family
Success
Property
Laurels
Money

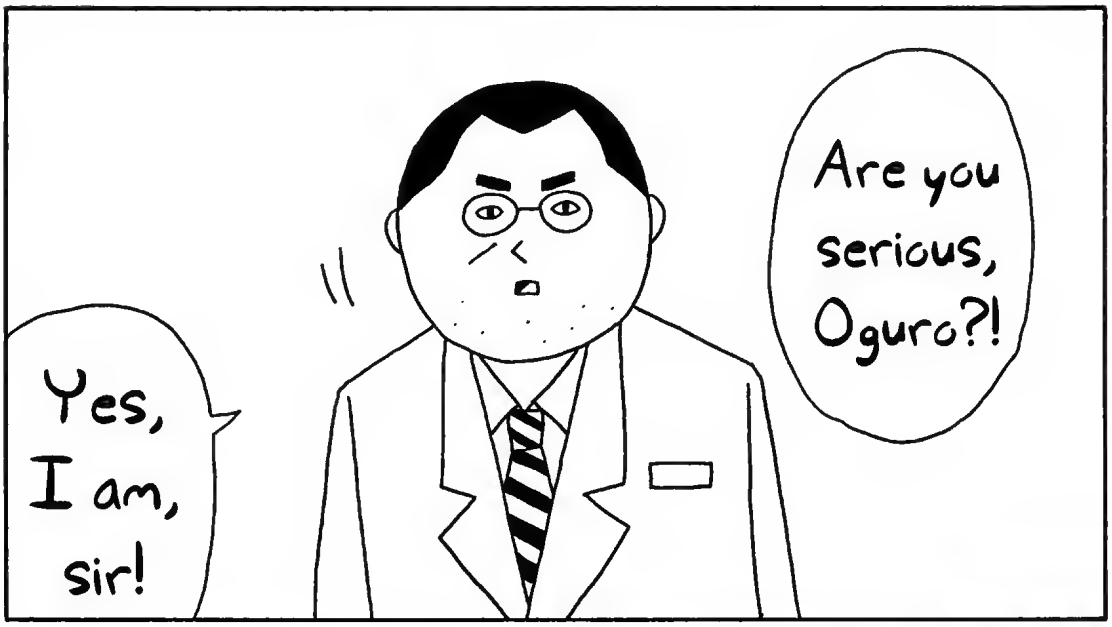
A cri de coeur...

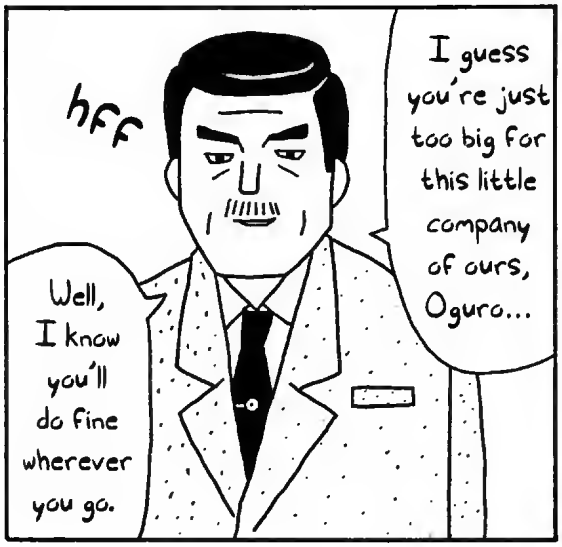
THAT'S RIGHT!
Home Run
MY VOICE WASN'T COMING THROUGH!!
...
mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter mutter
A MANGA THAT NOBODY BUT ME COULD DRAW...
OGURO-SAN?
OF COURSE! PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME!
I don't care!
I love you...
I...
I'm sorry...
UM, IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING ...
No, no, I'm sorry...
WOPE... SORRY ABOUT THAT.
I'M ALMOST DONE, SO IF YOU'D JUST WAIT A FEW MORE MINUTES.

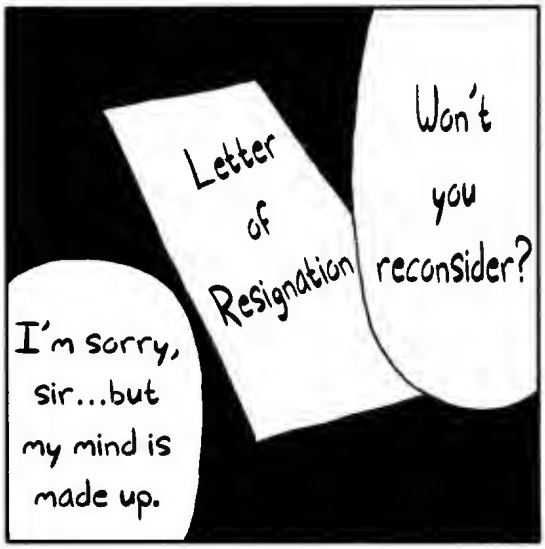

YES.
IT'S AUTOBIO-GRAPHICAL.
Home Run

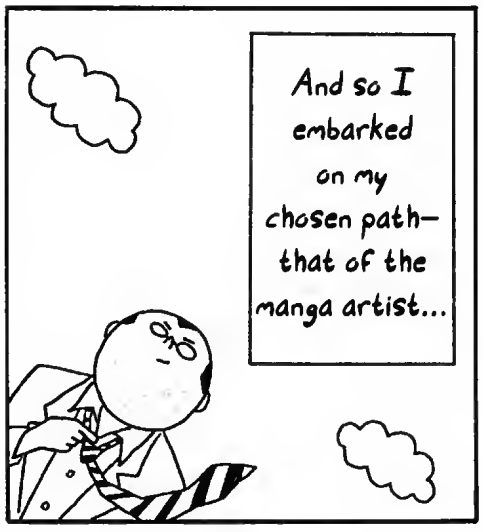
I'VE CHANGED, MISTER MURAKAMI!
I SEE...
I know...
It's cruel of me...
Home Run


...
smile
WELL, NO WONDER I COULD SENSE EVEN MORE PASSION THAN USUAL IN THIS STORY.
SERIOUSLY, THERE'S THIS INTENSITY HERE THAT'S JUST SO PALPABLE.
OH, BUT SORRY! LET ME GET ON WITH READING IT, THEN...
PLEASE DO, THANKS.
phlap...
Are you serious, Oguro?!
Yes,

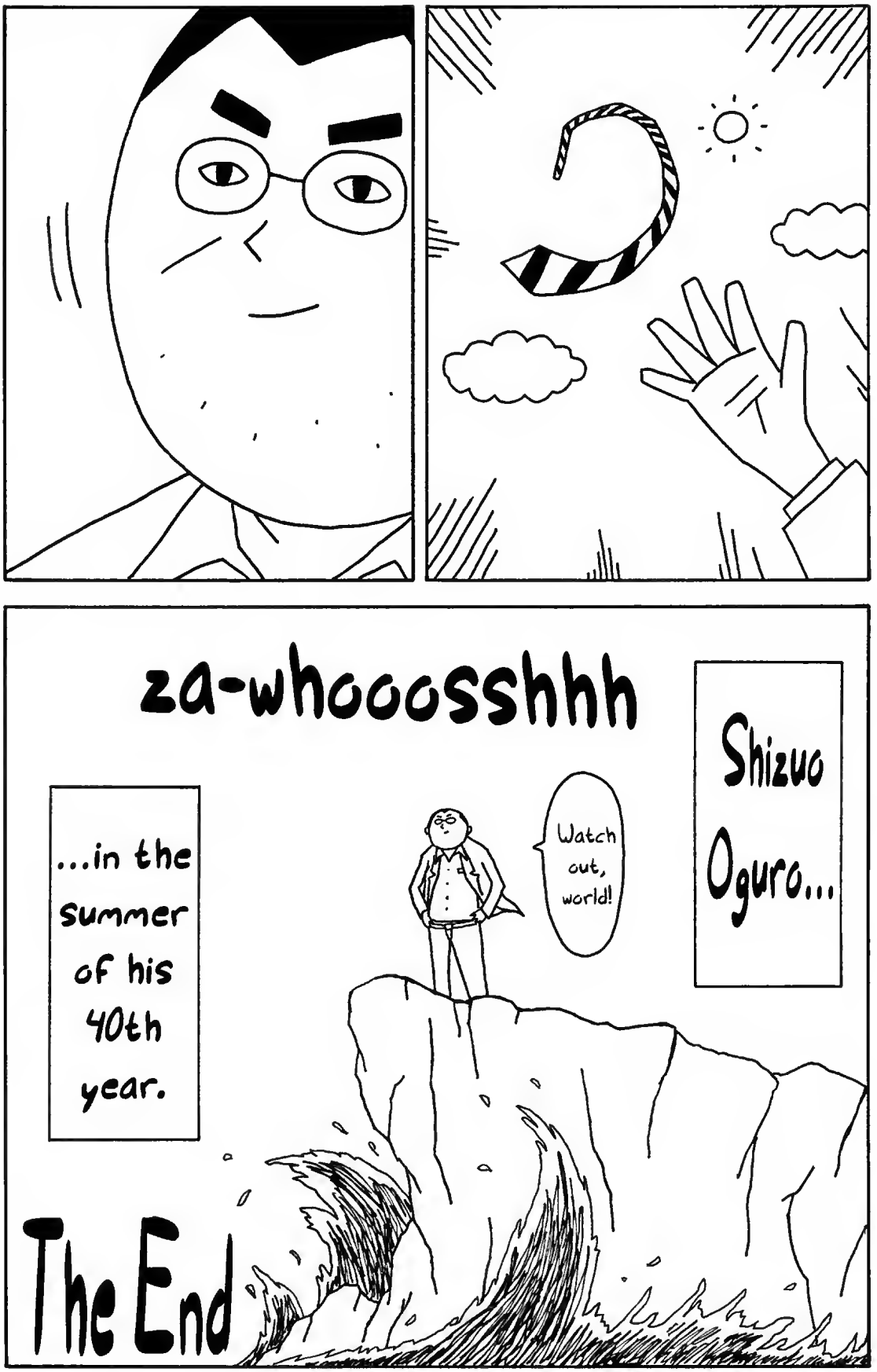

Are you serious, Oguro?!
Yes, I am, sir!


hff
I guess you're just too big for this little company of ours, Oguro...
Well, I know you'll do fine wherever you go.

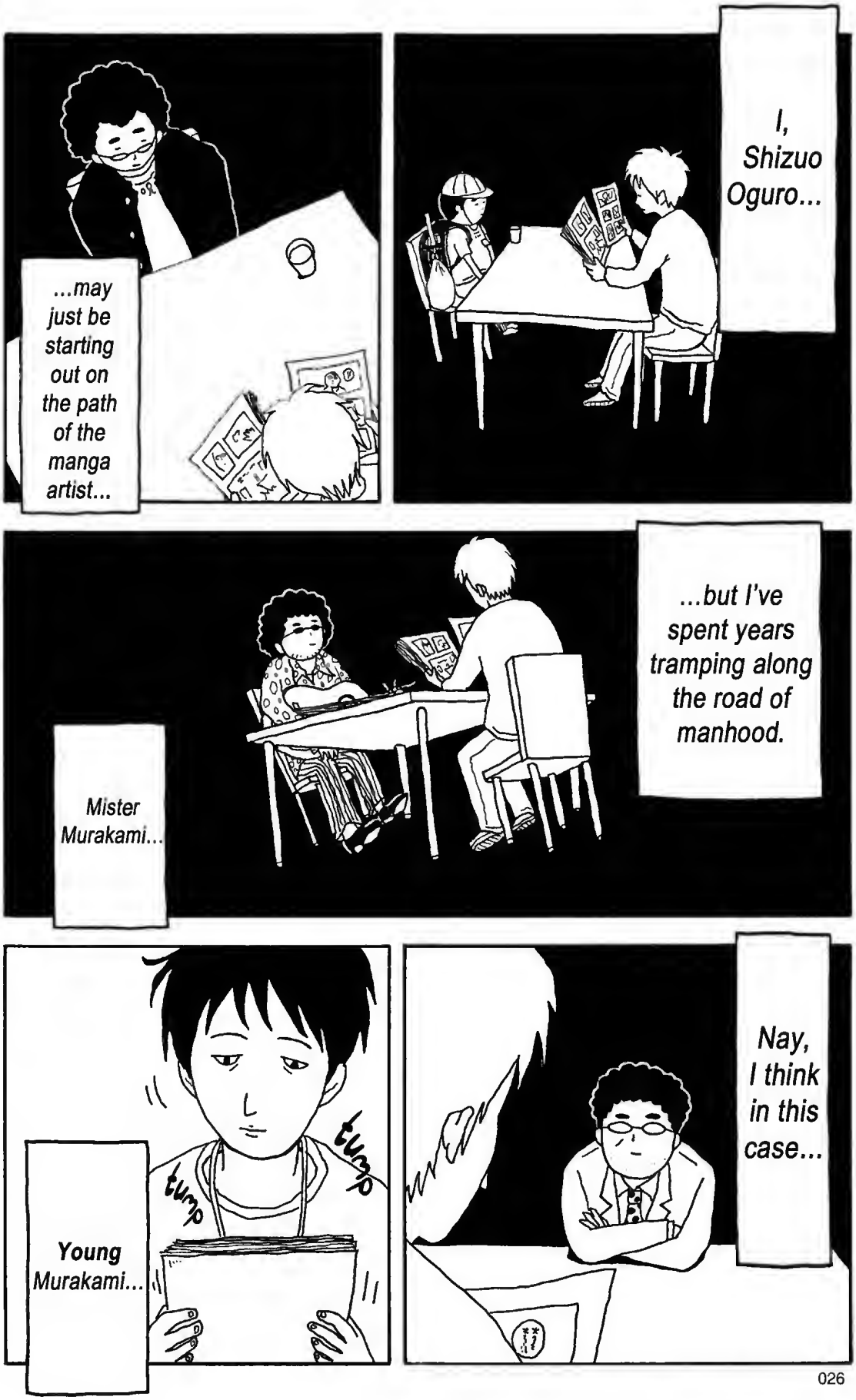

Won't you reconsider?
Letter of Resignation
I'm sorry, sir...but my mind is made up.

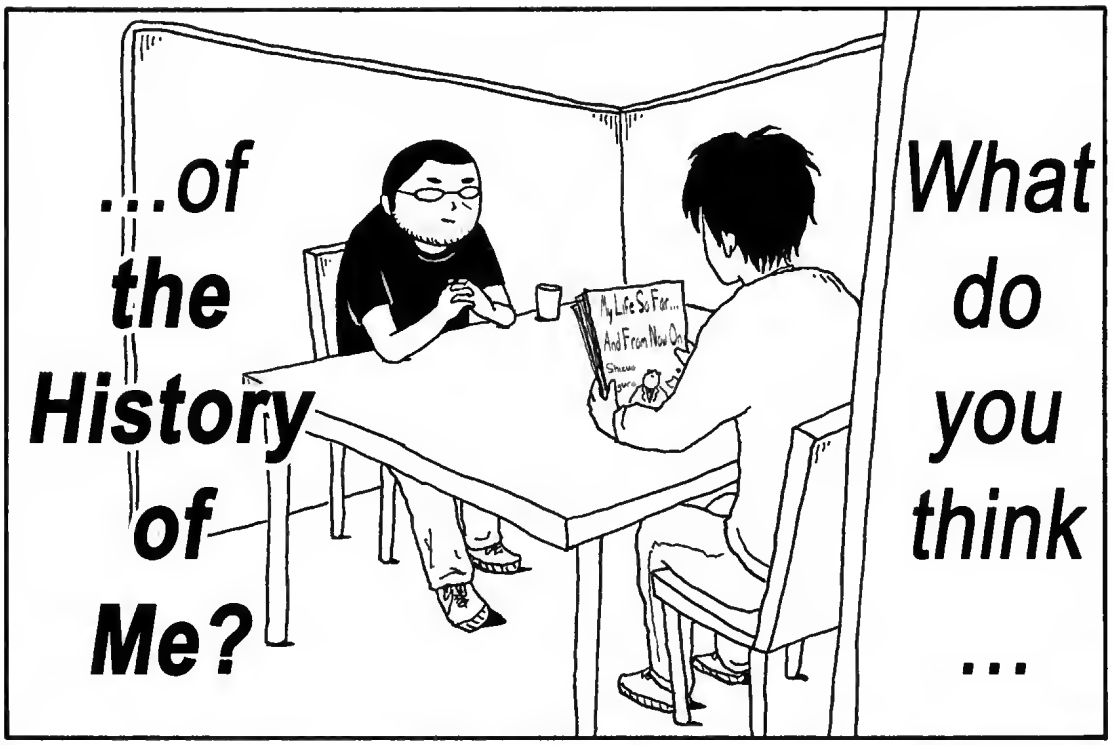

And so I embarked on my chosen path— that of the manga artist...

I'm sorry to lose you, son. Thank you for staying with us as long as you did!
Thank you for everything, sir!



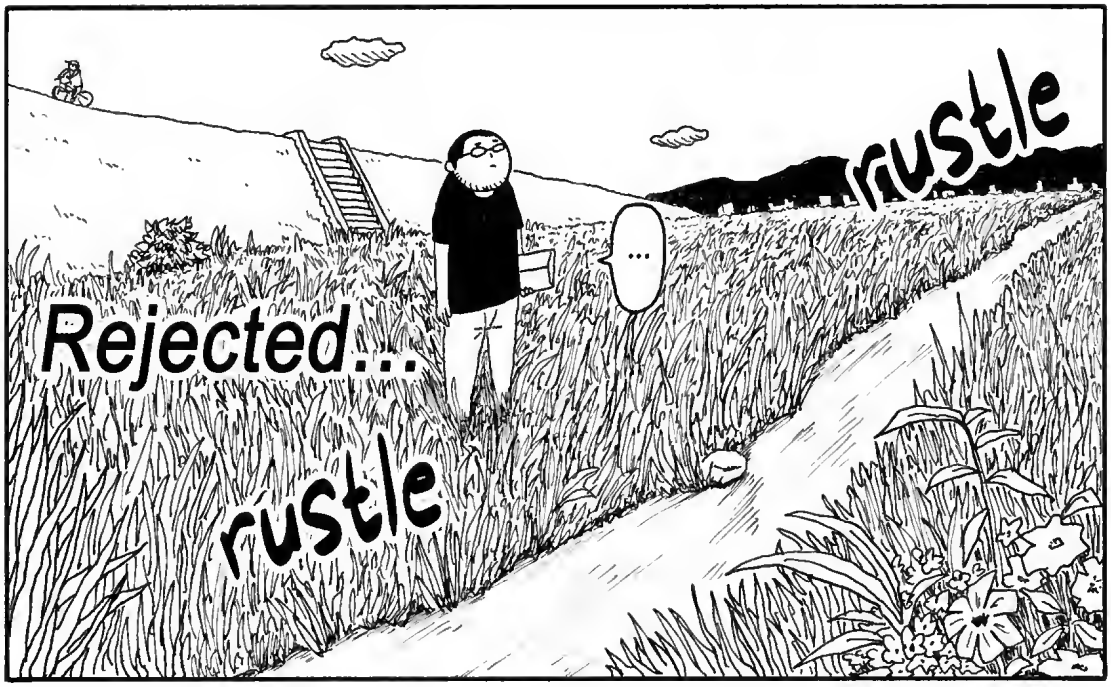
But my journey as a man continues...


...may just be starting out on the path of the manga artist...
I, Shizuo Oguro...
Mister Murakami...
...but I've spent years tramping along the road of manhood.
Young Murakami...
tump
tump
Nay, I think in this case...


...of the History of Me?
What do you think ...

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING...

NOT AT ALL...


Rejected...
rustle
rustle
...

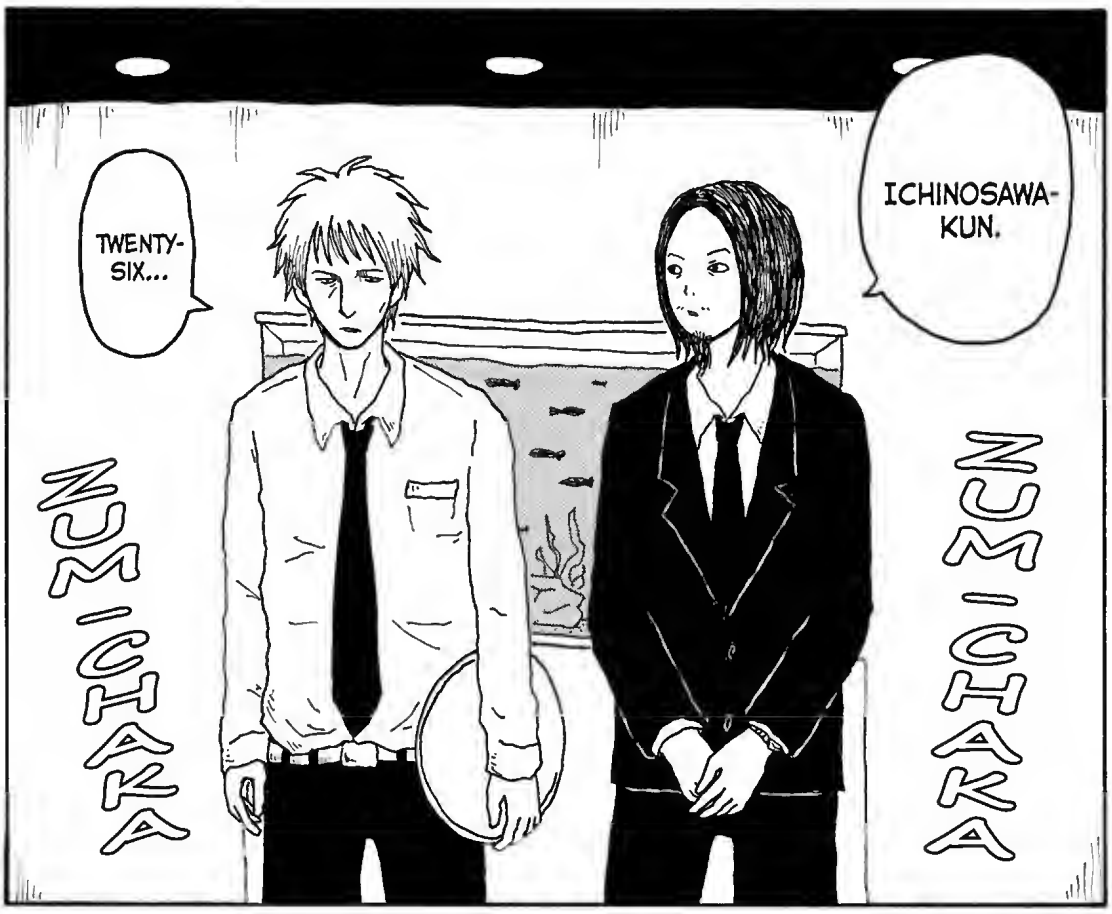
GREAT TALENTS BLOOM LATE...
GREAT TALENTS BLOOM LATE...

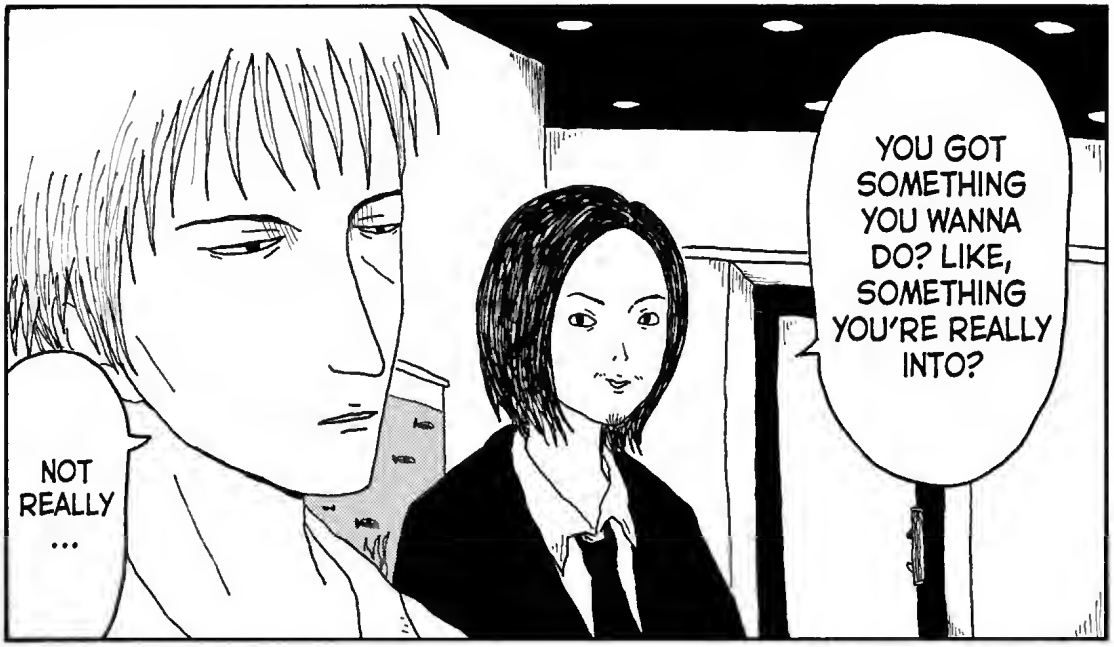
...in the summer of his 42nd year.
kaw kaw
HAPPY BIRTHDAY... To me...
Shizuo Oguro...

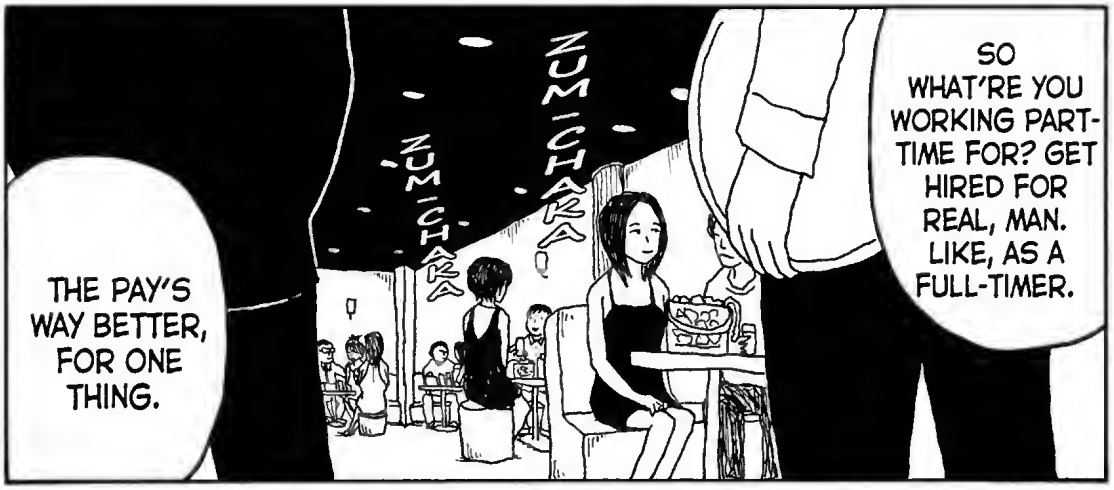
Chapter 6:

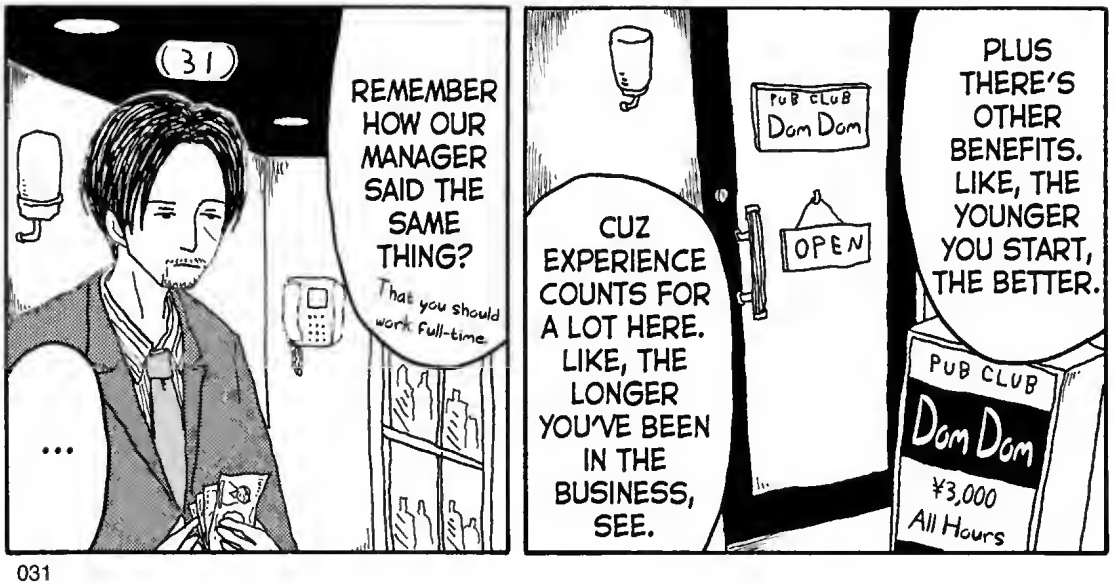
Principle

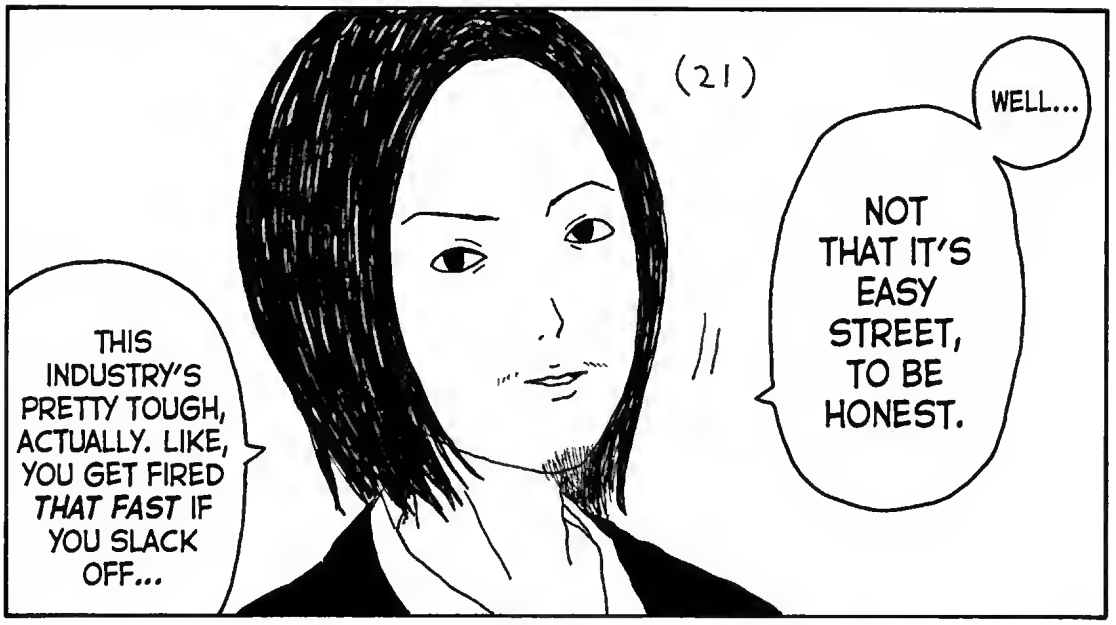
HOW OLD ARE YOU?

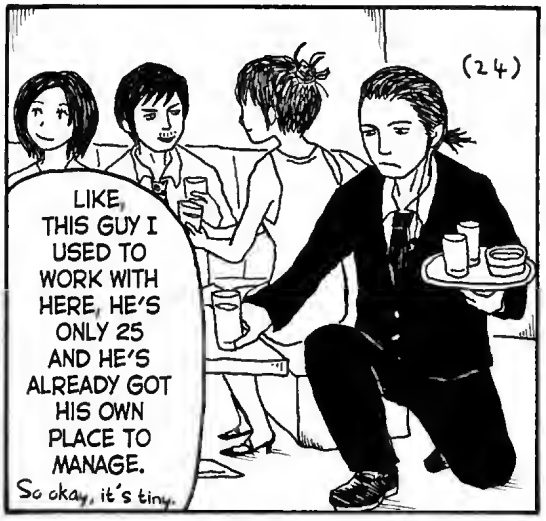

ICHINOSAWA-KUN.
TWENTY-SIX...
NUMICHAKA
NUMICHAKA

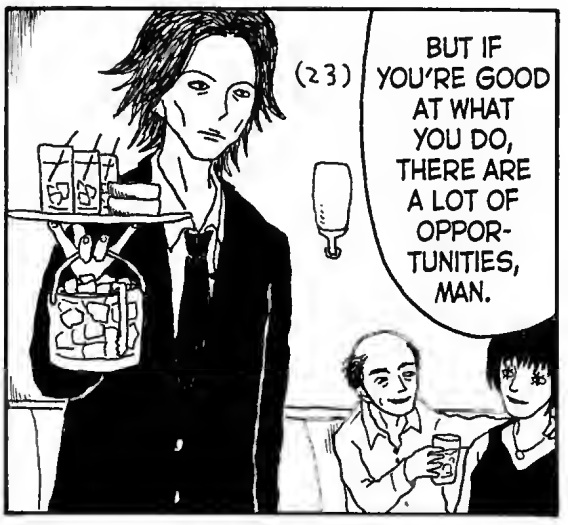

YOU GOT SOMETHING YOU WANNA DO? LIKE, SOMETHING YOU'RE REALLY INTO?
NOT REALLY ...

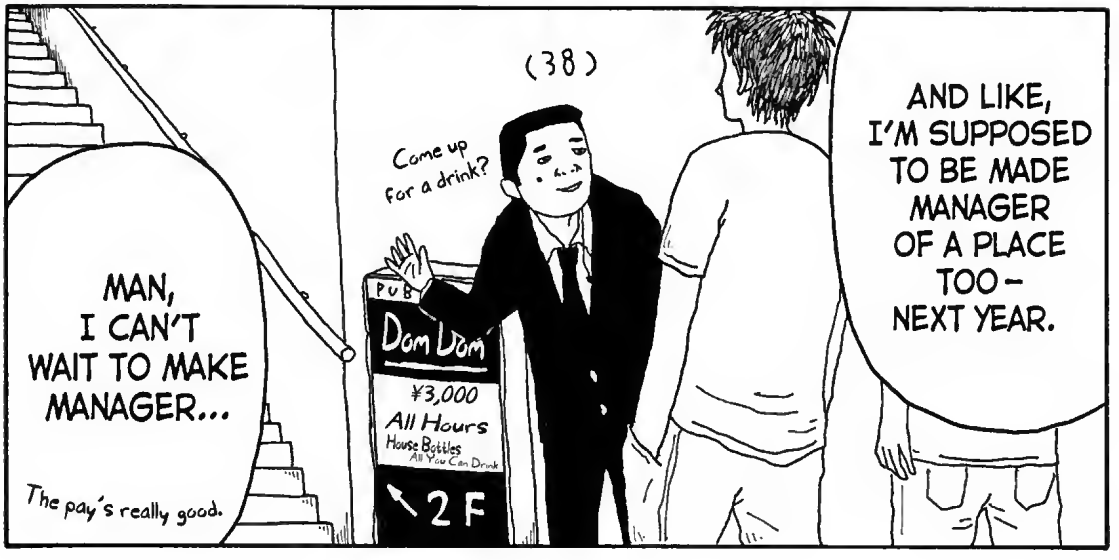

SO WHAT'RE YOU WORKING PART-TIME FOR? GET HIRED FOR REAL, MAN. LIKE, AS A FULL-TIMER.
NUM-CHAKA
NUM-CHAKA
THE PAY'S WAY BETTER, FOR ONE THING.


31
REMEMBER HOW OUR MANAGER SAID THE SAME THING?
That you should work full-time.
...
PUB CLUB Dom Dom
OPEN
PLUS THERE'S OTHER BENEFITS. LIKE, THE YOUNGER YOU START, THE BETTER.
CUZ EXPERIENCE COUNTS FOR A LOT HERE. LIKE, THE LONGER YOU'VE BEEN IN THE BUSINESS, SEE.
PUB CLUB
Dom Dom
¥3,000
All Hours

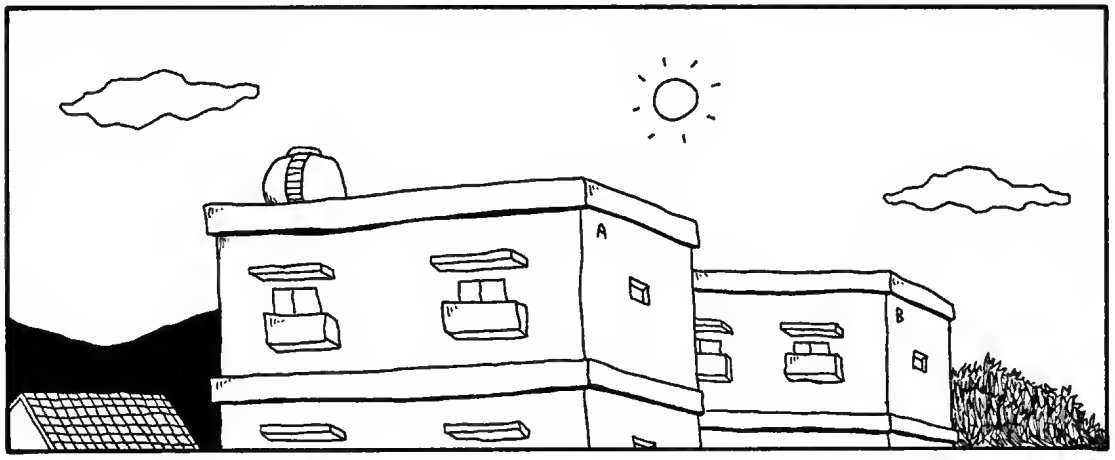

(21)
WELL...
NOT THAT IT'S EASY STREET, TO BE HONEST.
THIS INDUSTRY'S PRETTY TOUGH, ACTUALLY. LIKE, YOU GET FIRED *THAT FAST* IF YOU SLACK OFF...

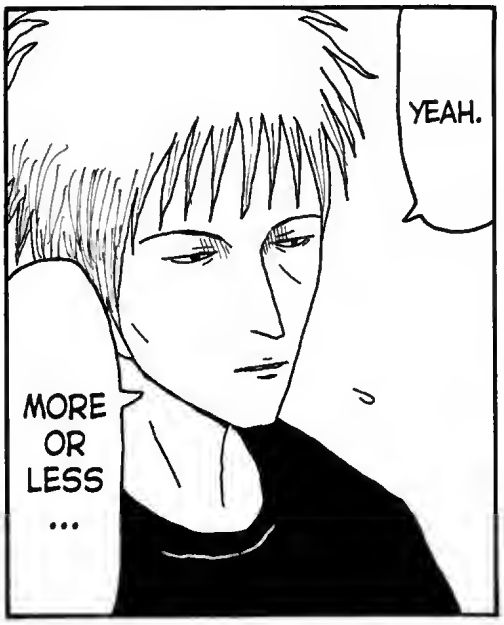

(24)
LIKE, THIS GUY I USED TO WORK WITH HERE, HE'S ONLY 25 AND HE'S ALREADY GOT HIS OWN PLACE TO MANAGE.
So okay, it's tiny.

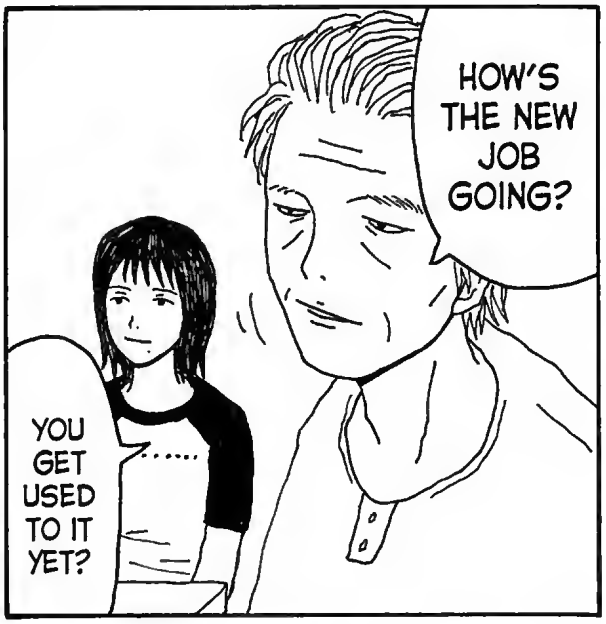

(23)
BUT IF YOU'RE GOOD AT WHAT YOU DO, THERE ARE A LOT OF OPPOR-TUNITIES, MAN.


(38)
MAN, I CAN'T WAIT TO MAKE MANAGER...
The pay's really good.
Come up for a drink?
PUB
Dom Dom
¥3,000
All Hours
House Bottles
All You Can Drink
2F
AND LIKE, I'M SUPPOSED TO BE MADE MANAGER OF A PLACE TOO— NEXT YEAR.

...
YOU DON'T TALK MUCH, DO YOU?
OH, YEAH! CAN I ASK YOU A REALLY DUMB QUESTION?
Just out of curiosity.
ZUM-CHAKA
Woww
ZUM-CHAKA
...
HOW COME YOU HAVE BLEACHED HAIR?
...
ZUM-CHAKA
ZUM-CHAKA
IS THAT, LIKE, A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE OR SOMETHING?
...

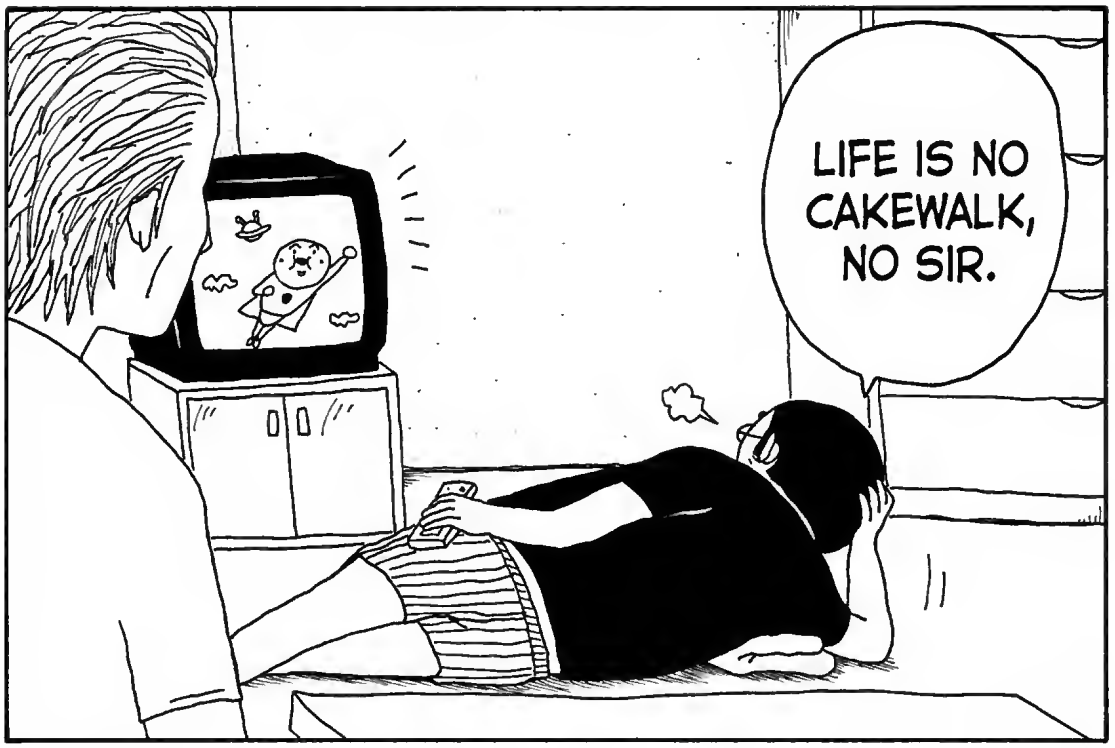

A
B

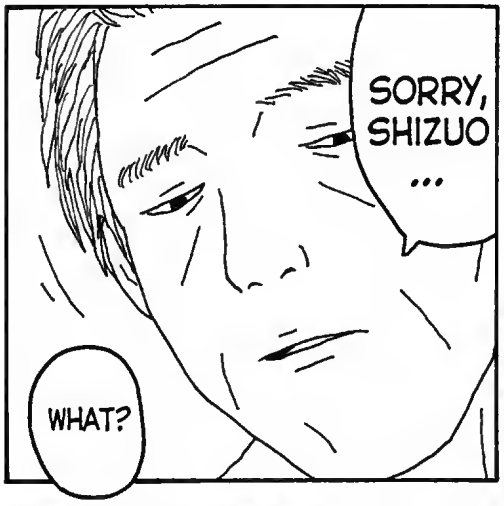

YEAH.
MORE OR LESS ...

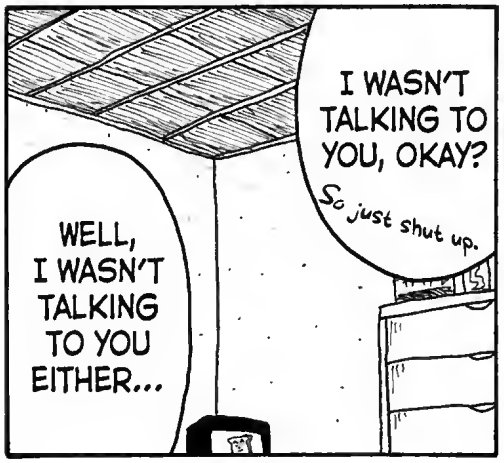

HOW'S THE NEW JOB GOING?
YOU GET USED TO IT YET?
.....

PLACES LIKE THAT, THEY GOT LOTS OF GIRLS WORKING THERE AS HOSTESSES, DON'T THEY?
UH-HUH...

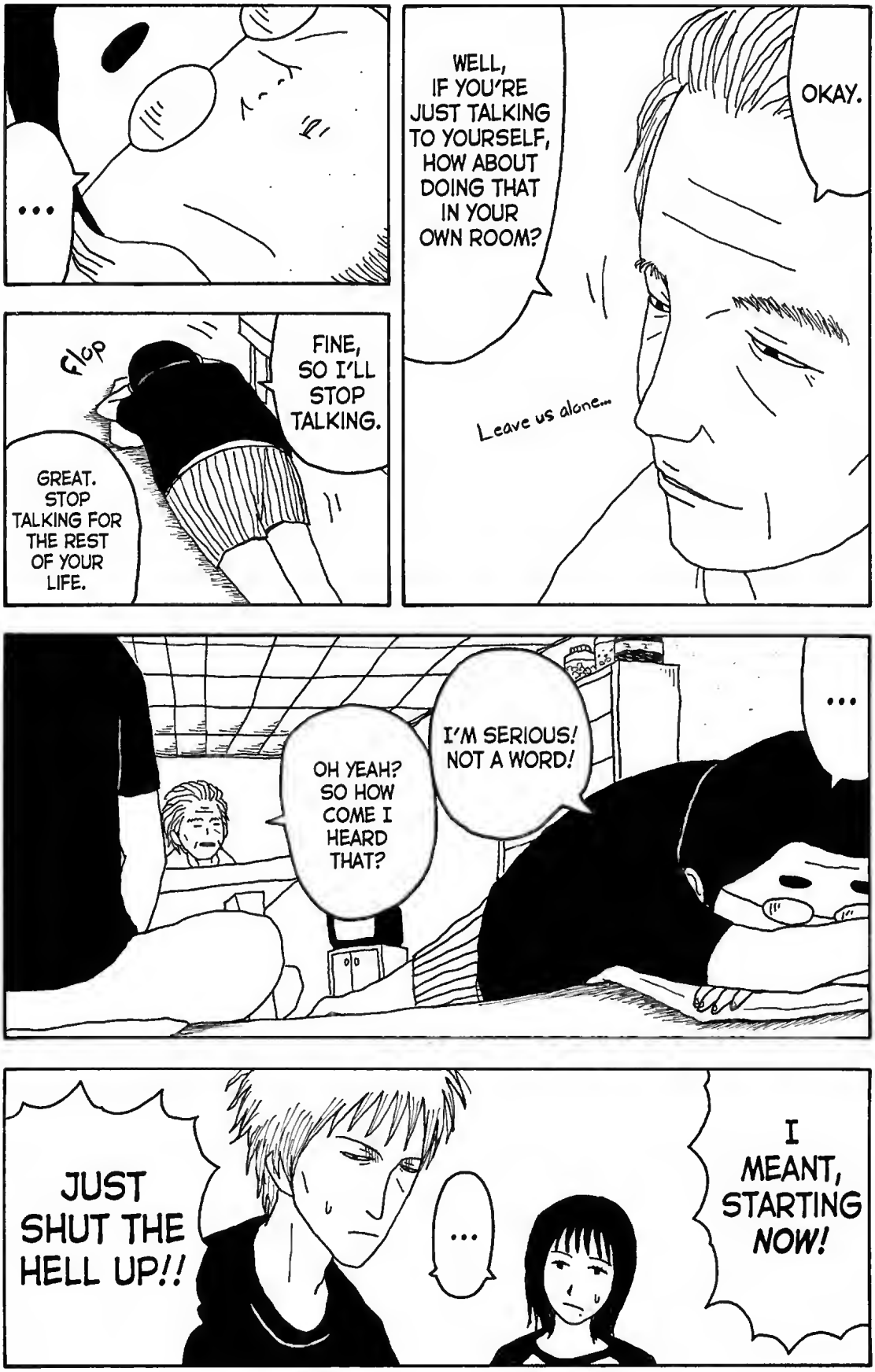
WELL ...
Any cuties?
YOU MEET ANY YOU LIKE?
...
...
GUYS WHO WORK AT PLACES LIKE THAT, THEY AREN'T ALLOWED TO DATE THE GIRLS. IT'S AGAINST THE RULES.
Like, duh.
?
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT, DAD?
mwup
I MEAN ...
...
I GUESS ...
RIGHT, SHUICHI?

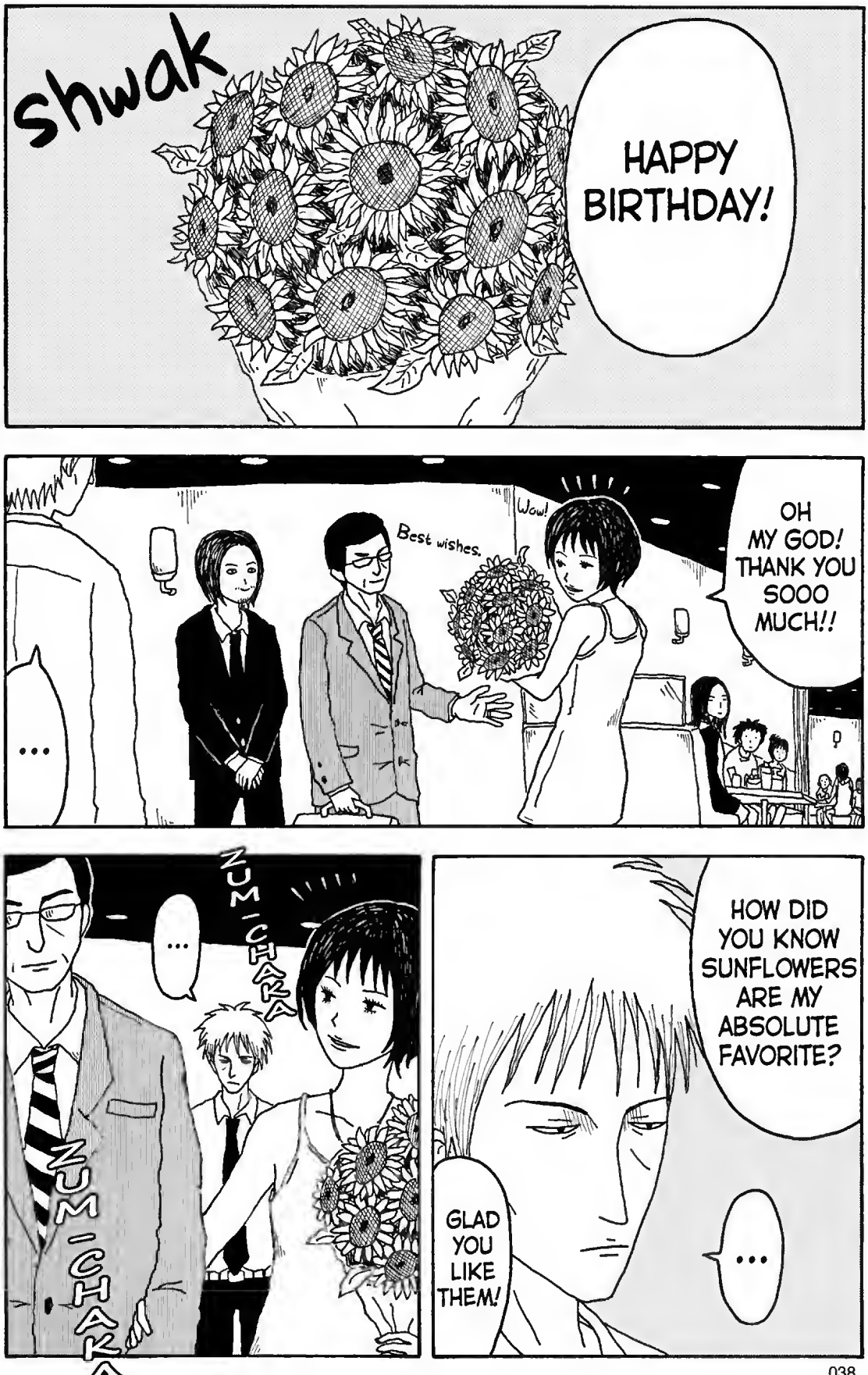

LIFE IS NO CAKEWALK, NO SIR.

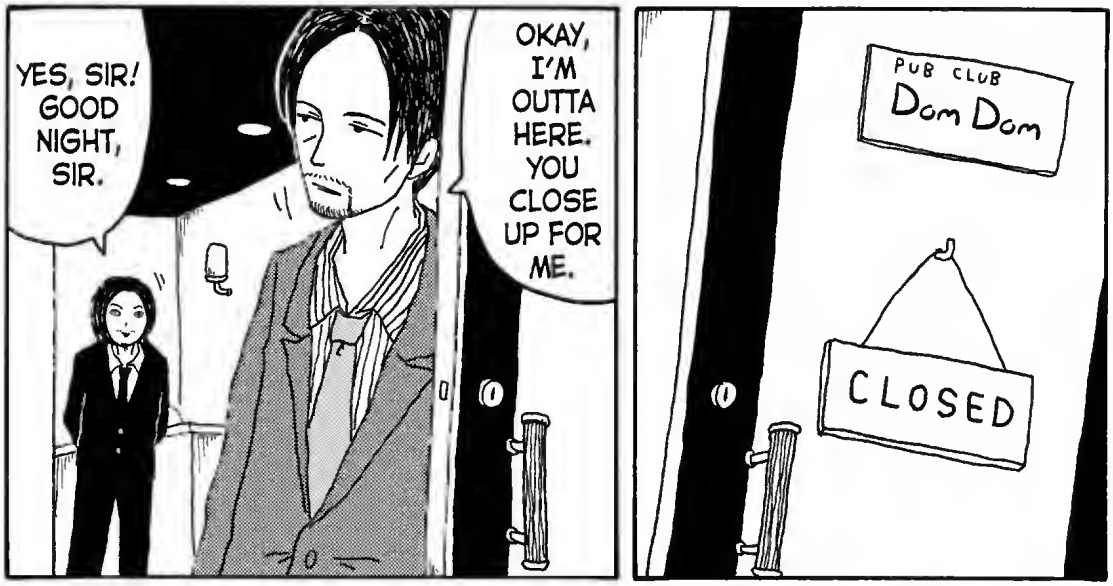

SORRY, SHIZUO ...
WHAT?

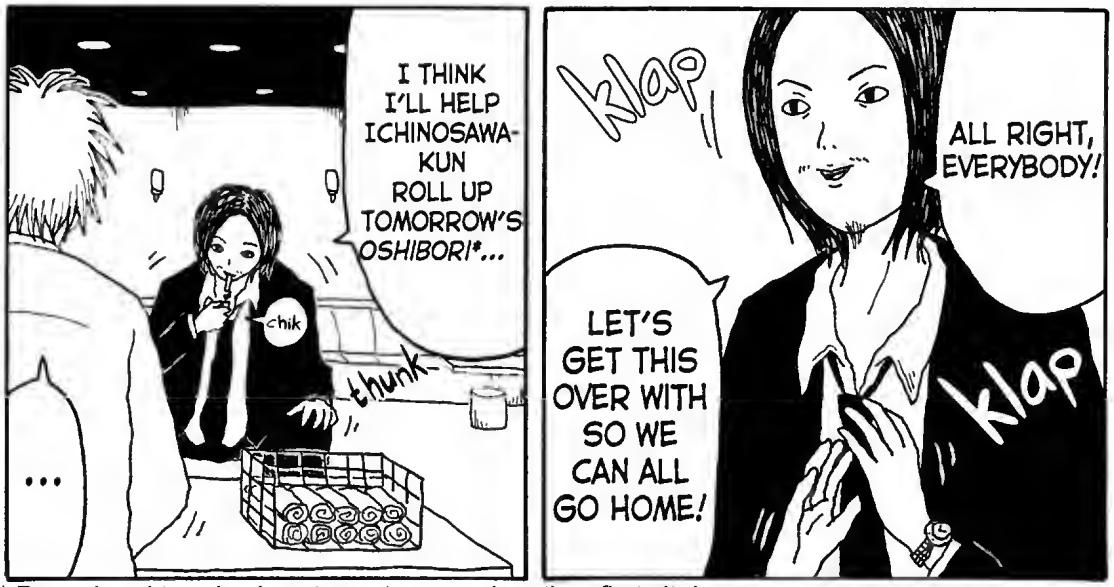

I WASN'T TALKING TO YOU, OKAY?
So just shut up.
WELL, I WASN'T TALKING TO YOU EITHER...

...
YOU THINK THERE'D BE A DREAM JOB LIKE THAT? IT DOESN'T EXIST...
Unfortunately.

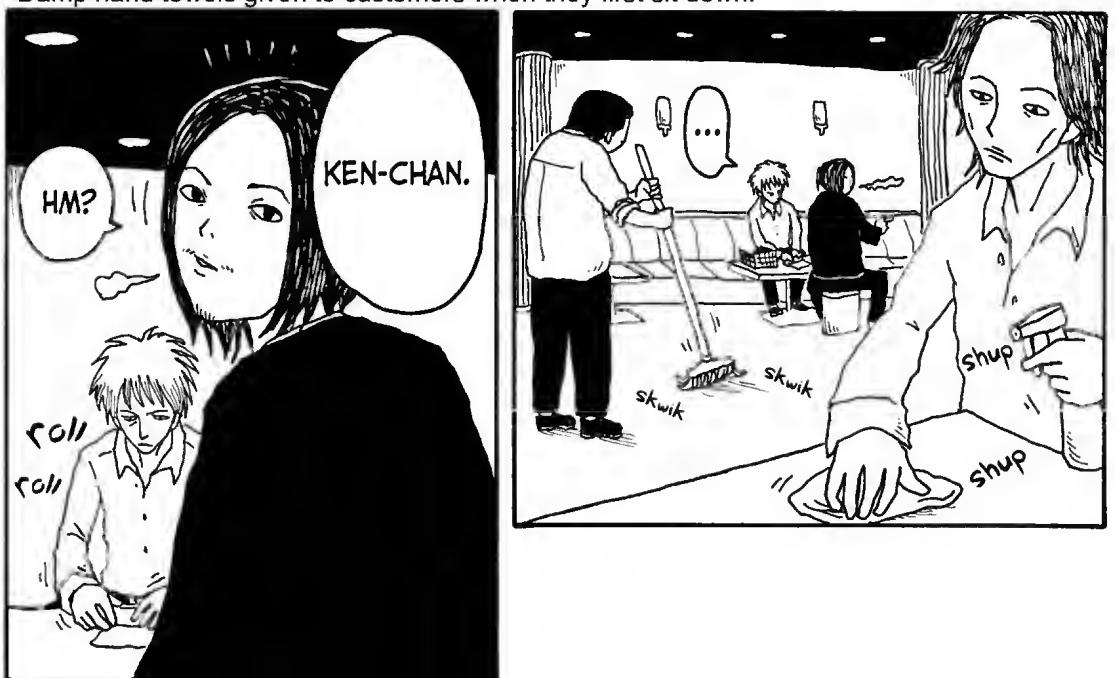

...
WELL, IF YOU'RE JUST TALKING TO YOURSELF, HOW ABOUT DOING THAT IN YOUR OWN ROOM?
OKAY.
Leave us alone...
flop
FINE, SO I'LL STOP TALKING.
GREAT. STOP TALKING FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
...
I'M SERIOUS! NOT A WORD!
OH YEAH? SO HOW COME I HEARD THAT?
JUST SHUT THE HELL UP!!
...
I MEANT, STARTING NOW!


shwak
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
Best wishes.
Wow!
OH MY GOD! THANK YOU SOOO MUCH!!
...
NUM-CHAKA
NUM-CHAKA
...
HOW DID YOU KNOW SUNFLOWERS ARE MY ABSOLUTE FAVORITE?
...
GLAD YOU LIKE THEM!



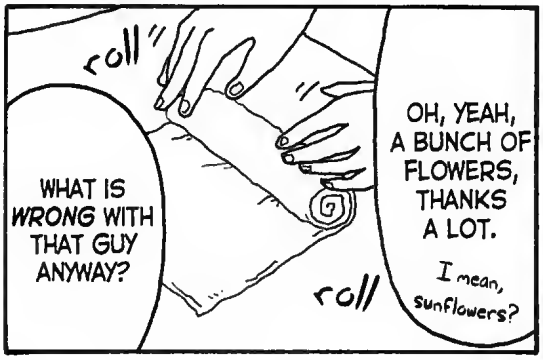


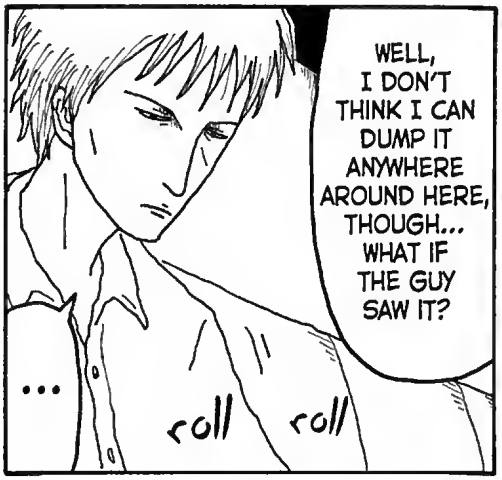
* Damp hand towels given to customers when they first sit down.



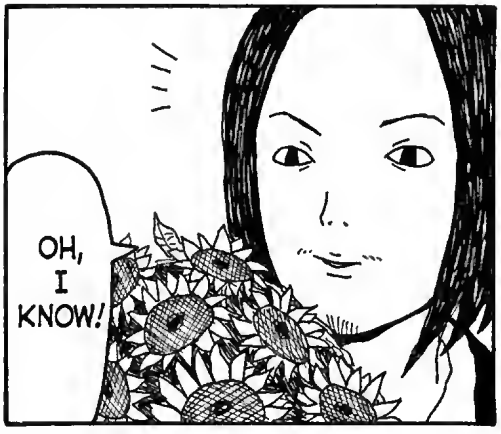
NO WAY, HOW COME?
They were a present.

DUMP THESE FOR ME, WILL YOU?
shwak


roll
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THAT GUY ANYWAY?
roll
OH, YEAH, A BUNCH OF FLOWERS, THANKS A LOT.
I mean, sunflowers?

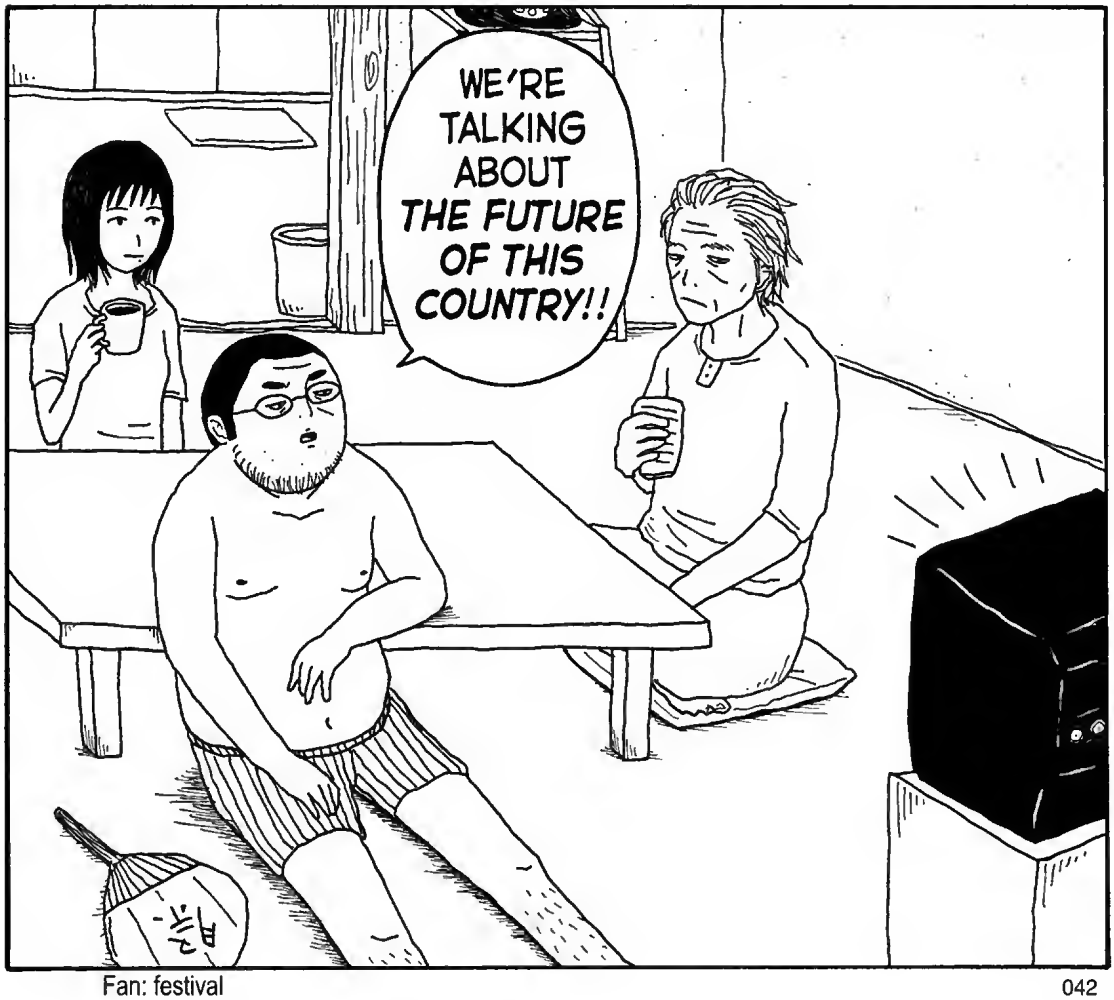

WELL, I DON'T THINK I CAN DUMP IT ANYWHERE AROUND HERE, THOUGH... WHAT IF THE GUY SAW IT?
...
roll
roll

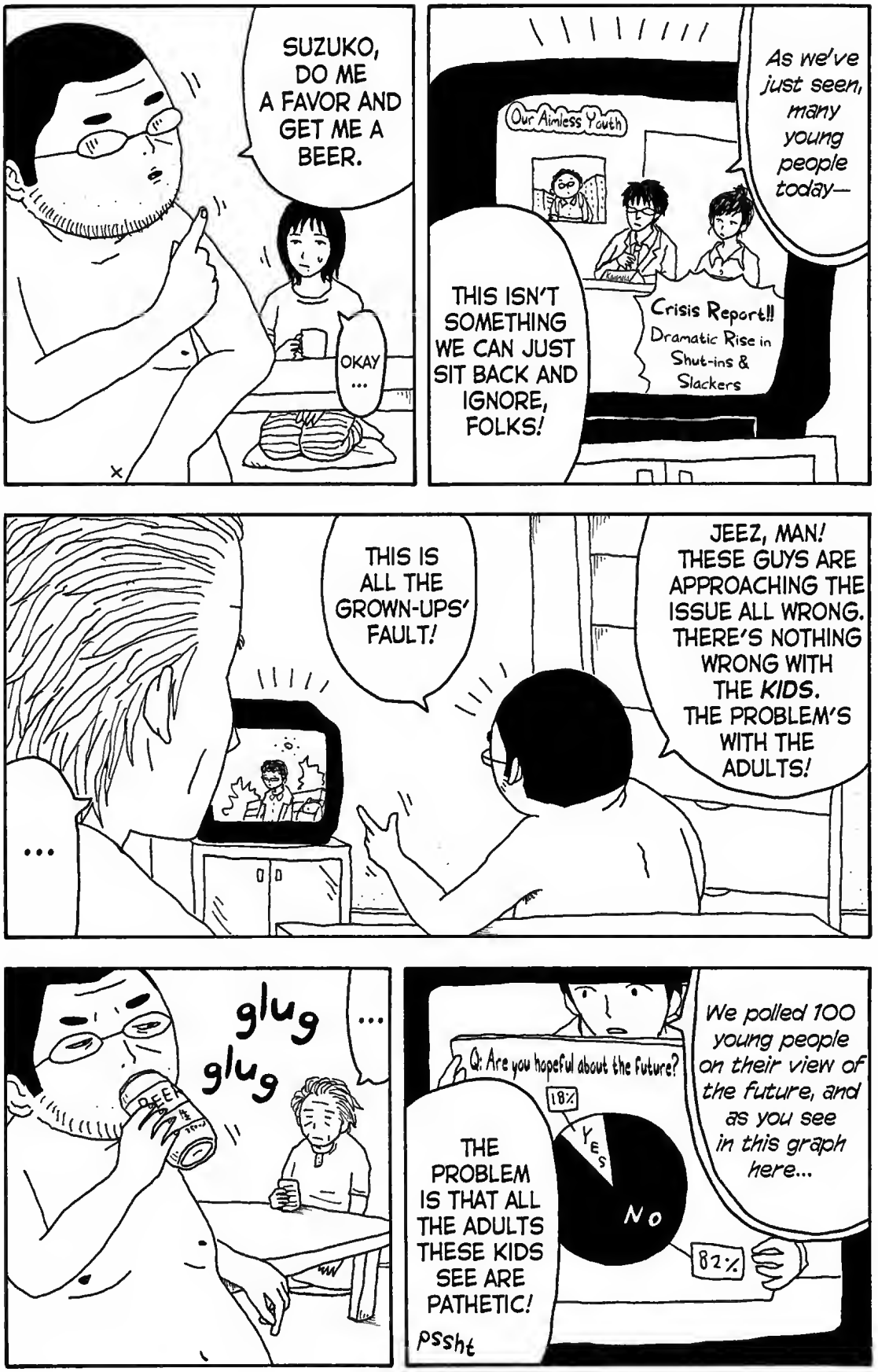
ha ha ha ha
I HOPE HE GETS HIT BY A TRUCK.
Meanie.
...


OH, I KNOW!

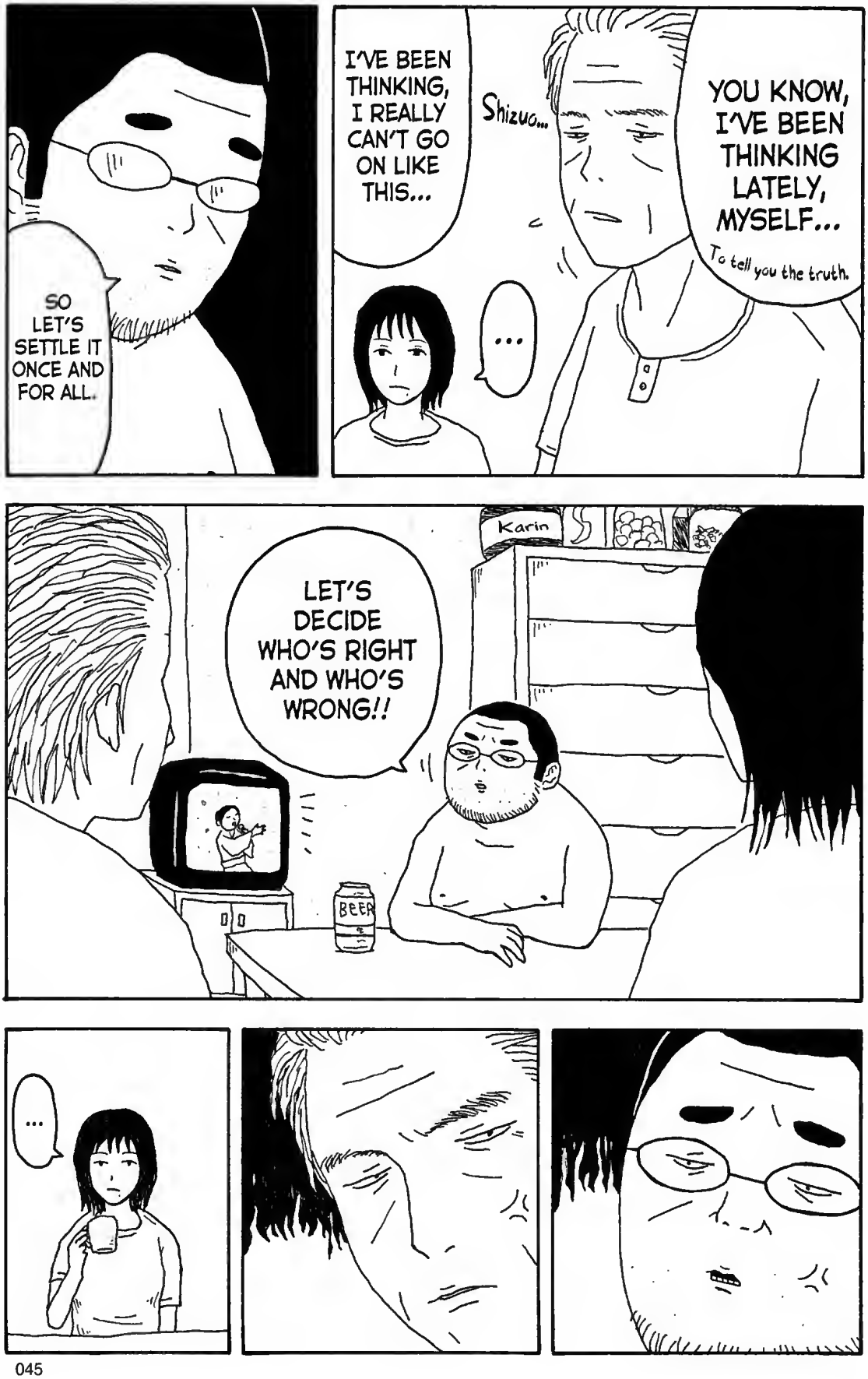
DID YOU MEAN ME?
LIKE, YEAH? YOU'RE OUR NEW GUY, AREN'T YOU?
HEY! YOU OVER THERE, OUR NEW GUY!
Can you come 'ere a sec?
You're so nice.
Wow.
GOOD TO HAVE YOU ON BOARD!
THANK YOU...
HERE! THIS IS YOUR WELCOME BOUQUET!
From me to you, ha ha!
OH ...
ha
ha
ha
ha
ha
...
DON'T THROW IT AWAY, NOW.

THIS IS SERIOUS!
WE ALL NEED TO GIVE THIS SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT! I MEAN...
C'mon!


WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY!!

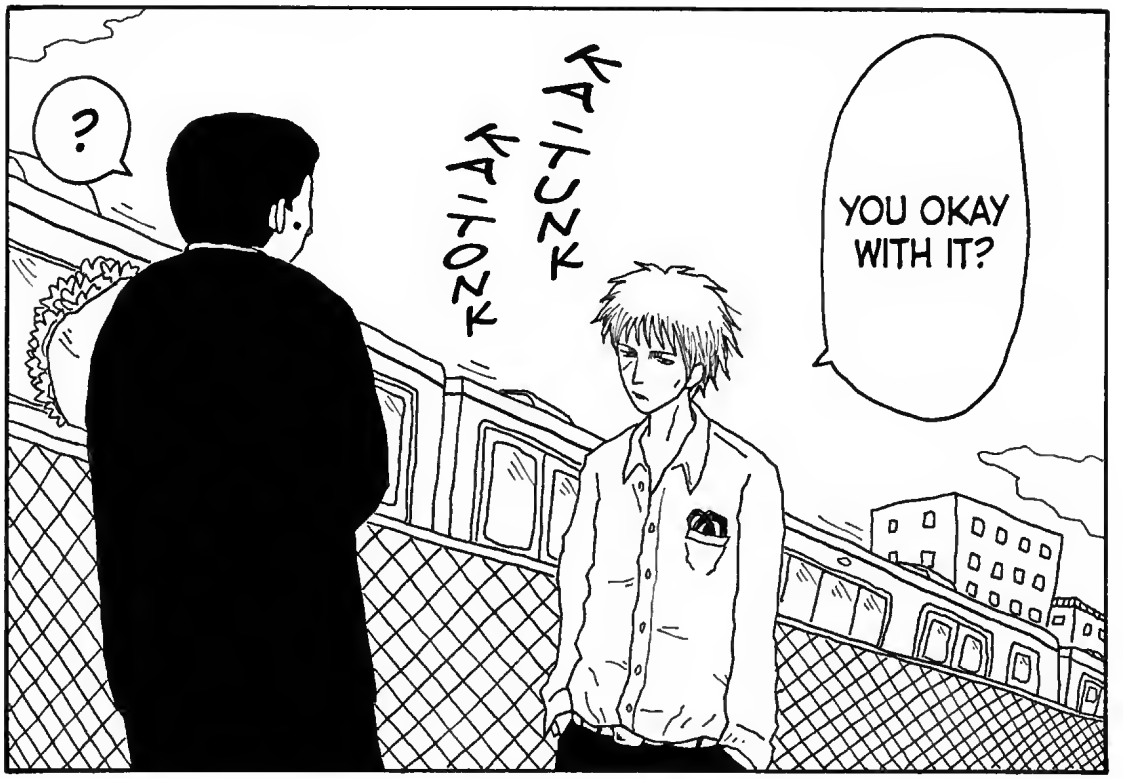

SUZUKO, DO ME A FAVOR AND GET ME A BEER.
OKAY ...
As we've just seen, many young people today—
Our Aimless Youth
Crisis Report!! Dramatic Rise in Shut-ins & Slackers
THIS ISN'T SOMETHING WE CAN JUST SIT BACK AND IGNORE, FOLKS!
THIS IS ALL THE GROWN-UPS' FAULT!
JEEZ, MAN! THESE GUYS ARE APPROACHING THE ISSUE ALL WRONG. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THE KIDS. THE PROBLEM'S WITH THE ADULTS!
...
glug glug
BEER
...
We polled 100 young people on their view of the future, and as you see in this graph here...
Q: Are you hopeful about the future?
18%
Yes
No
82%
THE PROBLEM IS THAT ALL THE ADULTS THESE KIDS SEE ARE PATHETIC!
pssht

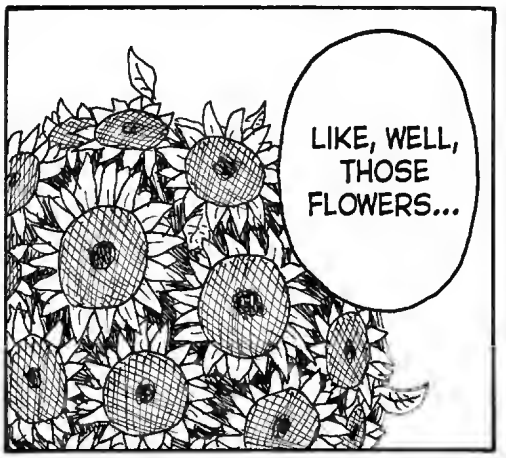
As an aimless adult...
HEY, SHIZUO. WHY DON'T WE LEAVE THESE REALLY BIG, SERIOUS ISSUES TO THE EXPERTS, HUH?
YOU'VE GOT OTHER PROBLEMS YOU OUGHT TO BE THINKING ABOUT, AM I WRONG?
Lots of 'em.
YOU DON'T GET ME AT ALL.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT!
YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND, DADDY-O...
?
HISAYA
BEER
生
350ml
ktunk
DAD...
...
YOU GOT A LOT OF NERVE, SITTING AROUND MOUTHING OFF AT THE TV, SONNY BOY!
ALL THE ADULTS THESE KIDS SEE ARE PATHETIC? FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, YOU'RE THE MOST PATHETIC ADULT OF THEM ALL!

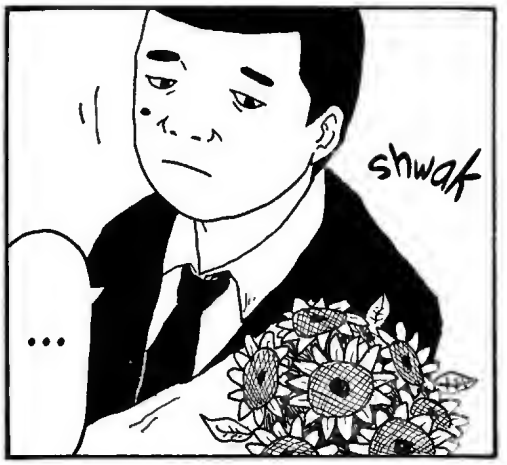

SO LET'S SETTLE IT ONCE AND FOR ALL.
I'VE BEEN THINKING, I REALLY CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS...
Shizuo...
...
YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN THINKING LATELY, MYSELF...
To tell you the truth.
Karin
LET'S DECIDE WHO'S RIGHT AND WHO'S WRONG!!
BEER
...

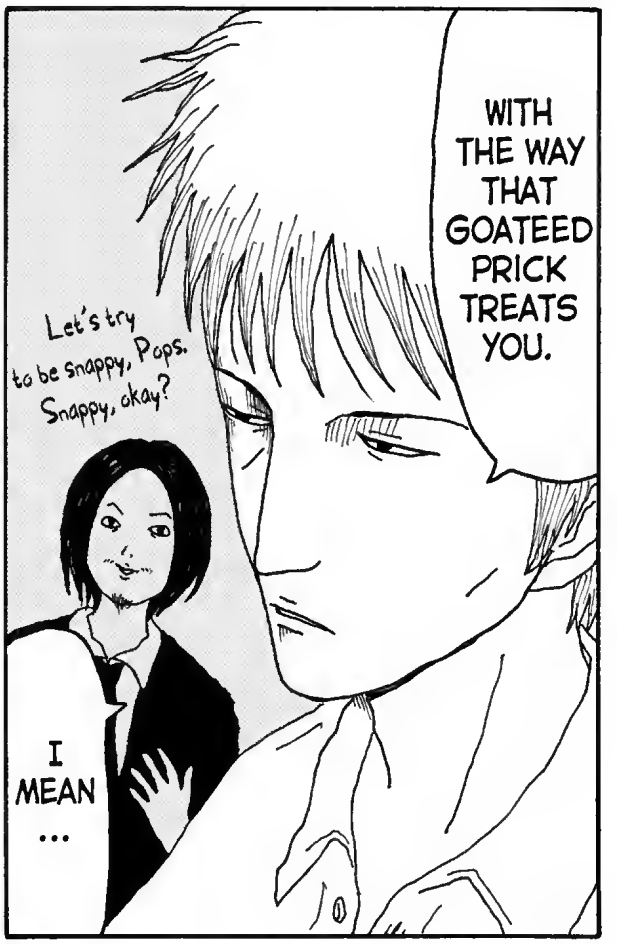
HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING THERE A LONG TIME, ICHINOSAWA-SAN?
shwak
chrp
shwak
shwak
chrp
ABOUT TWO WEEKS OR SO...
Only...
OH, REALLY? JUST TWO WEEKS?
YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO POLITE WITH ME, YOU KNOW...
Calling me "san" and all.
I'M JUST A PART-TIMER, FOR ONE THING.
chrp
chrp
chrp
MY GOODNESS, YOU CERTAINLY LEARN FAST!
I, on the other hand...
UM...
YES?

chrp
chrp
...
AND REALLY, YOU'VE BEEN SUCH A GREAT HELP TO ME, ICHINOSAWA-SAN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D HAVE DONE IF YOU HADN'T SHOWN ME HOW TO DO SO MANY OF THE TASKS THERE...
OH, THAT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING.
shwak
...
IT'S JUST SO HARD TO REMEMBER NEW THINGS AT MY AGE...
mutter mutter
shwak
shwak
NO...
Sorry.
BUT I'M SUCH A SLOW LEARNER, I MUST REALLY GET ON YOUR NERVES SOMETIMES ...
UM...
YES?
WELL THEN. I LIVE THAT WAY, SO...
KA-TUNK
KA-TONK
KA-TUNK
KA-TONK

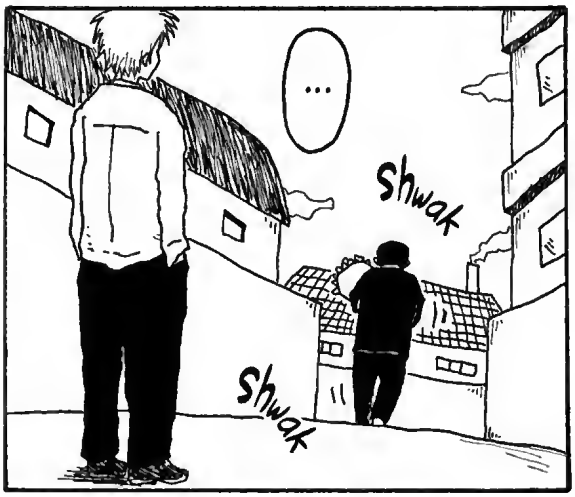

YOU OKAY WITH IT?
KA-CHUNK
KA-CHUNK
?

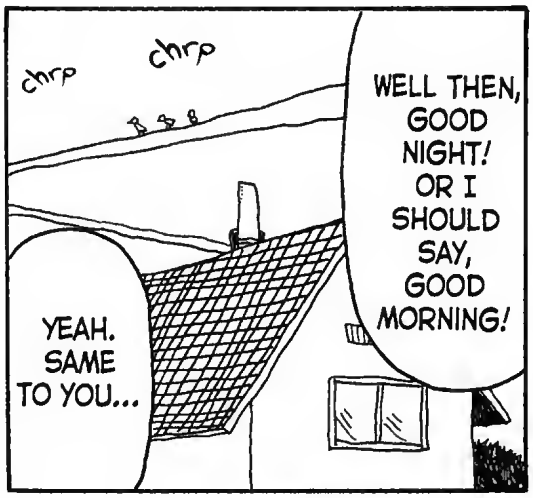

LIKE, WELL, THOSE FLOWERS...

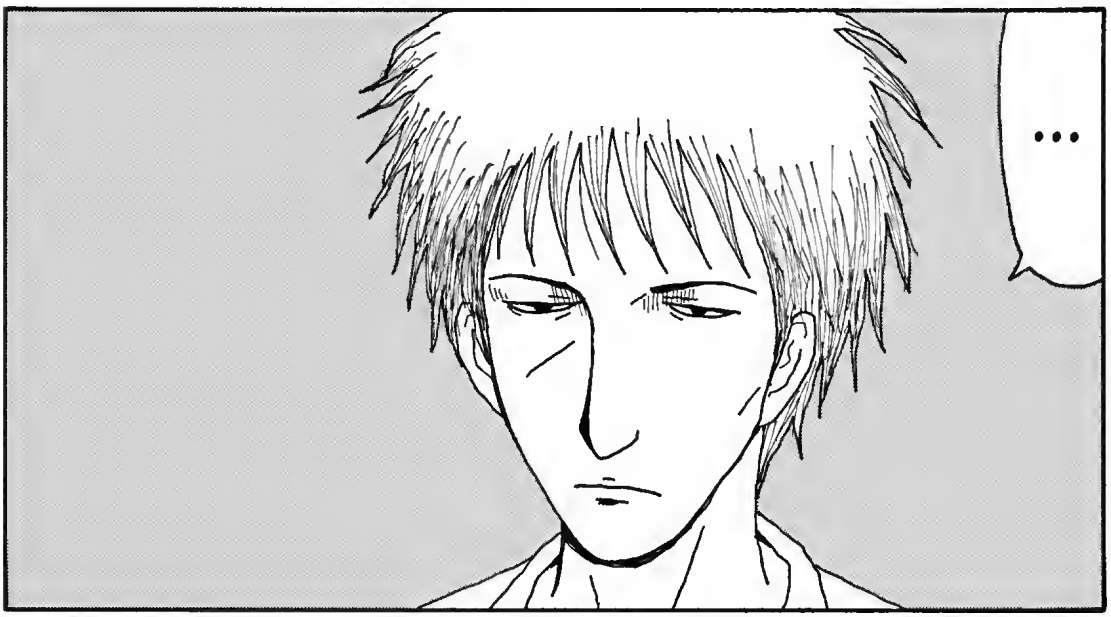

shwak
...

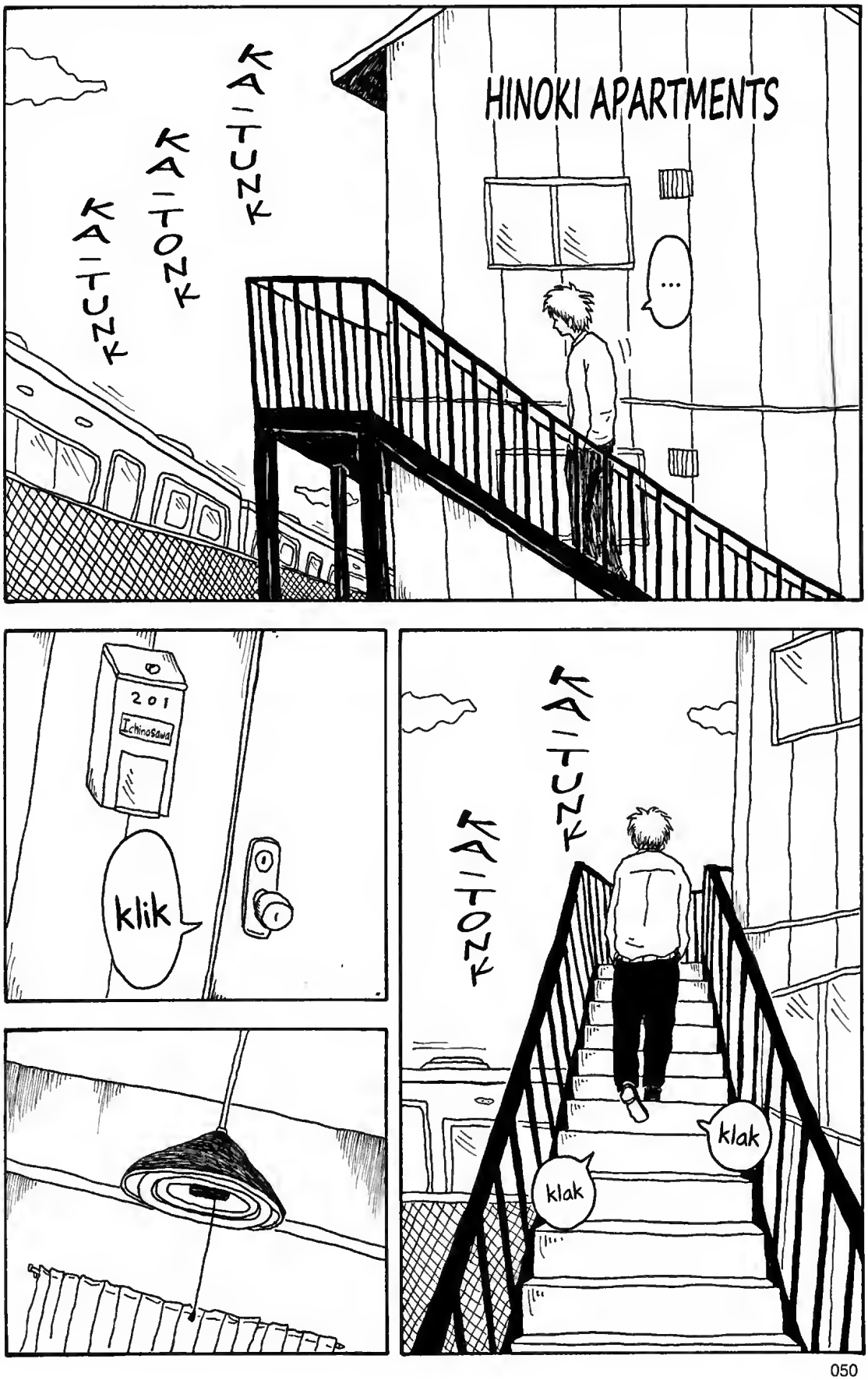

WITH THE WAY THAT GOATEED PRICK TREATS YOU.
Let's try to be snappy, Pops. Snappy, okay?
I MEAN ...

I'M THE NEWEST, SO I'M THE LOWEST IN THE PECKING ORDER.
That's just the way it works.
IT'S FINE.


...
Shwak
Shwak


chrp
chrp
YEAH. SAME TO YOU...
WELL THEN, GOOD NIGHT! OR I SHOULD SAY, GOOD MORNING!

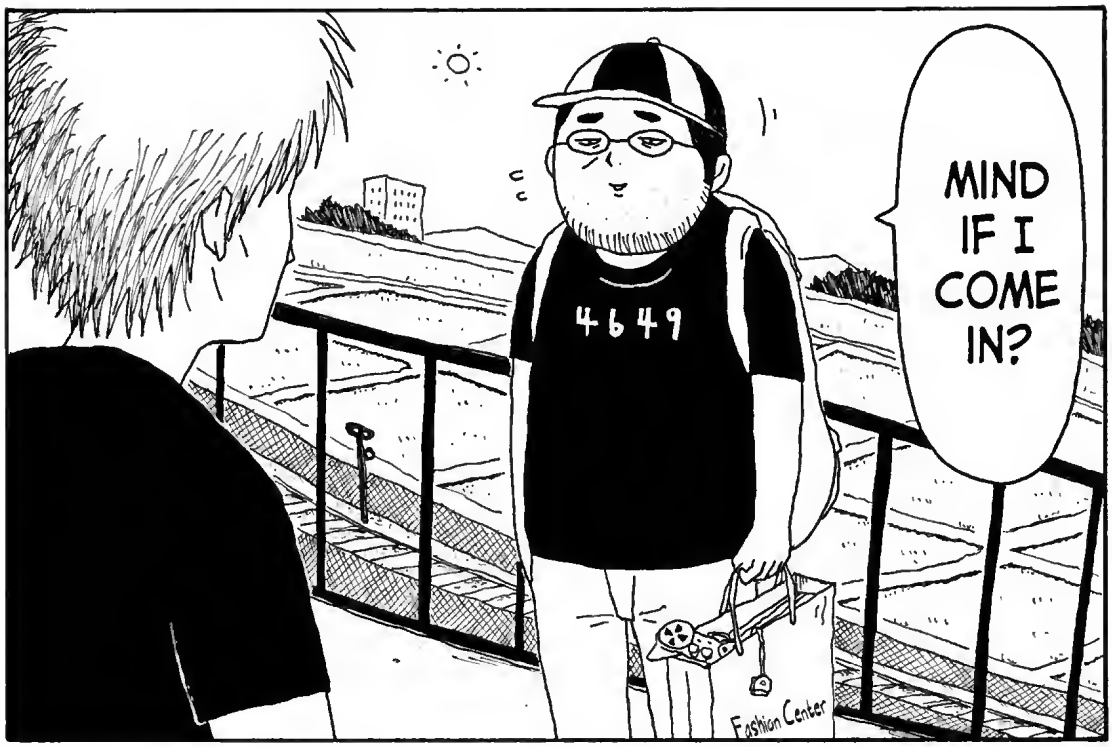

...

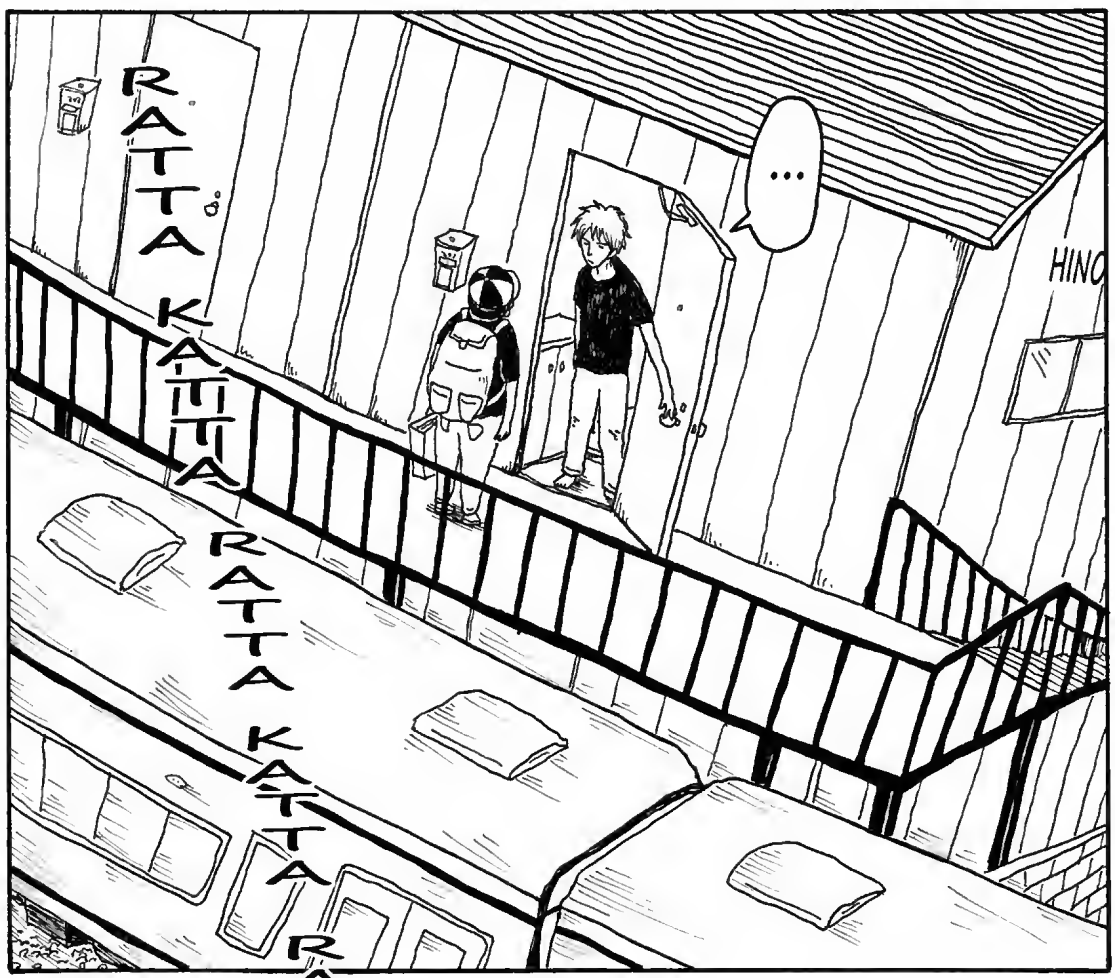

HINOKI APARTMENTS
...
KA-TUNK
KA-TONK
KA-TUNK
201
Ichinosawa
klik
KA-TUNK
KA-TONK
klak
klak

Furniture & Interiors
October
EKKE
Fresh
New
Series
Cup Udon
COFFEE
...
...

LIFE SUCKS...
nok
nok
nok
nok
...

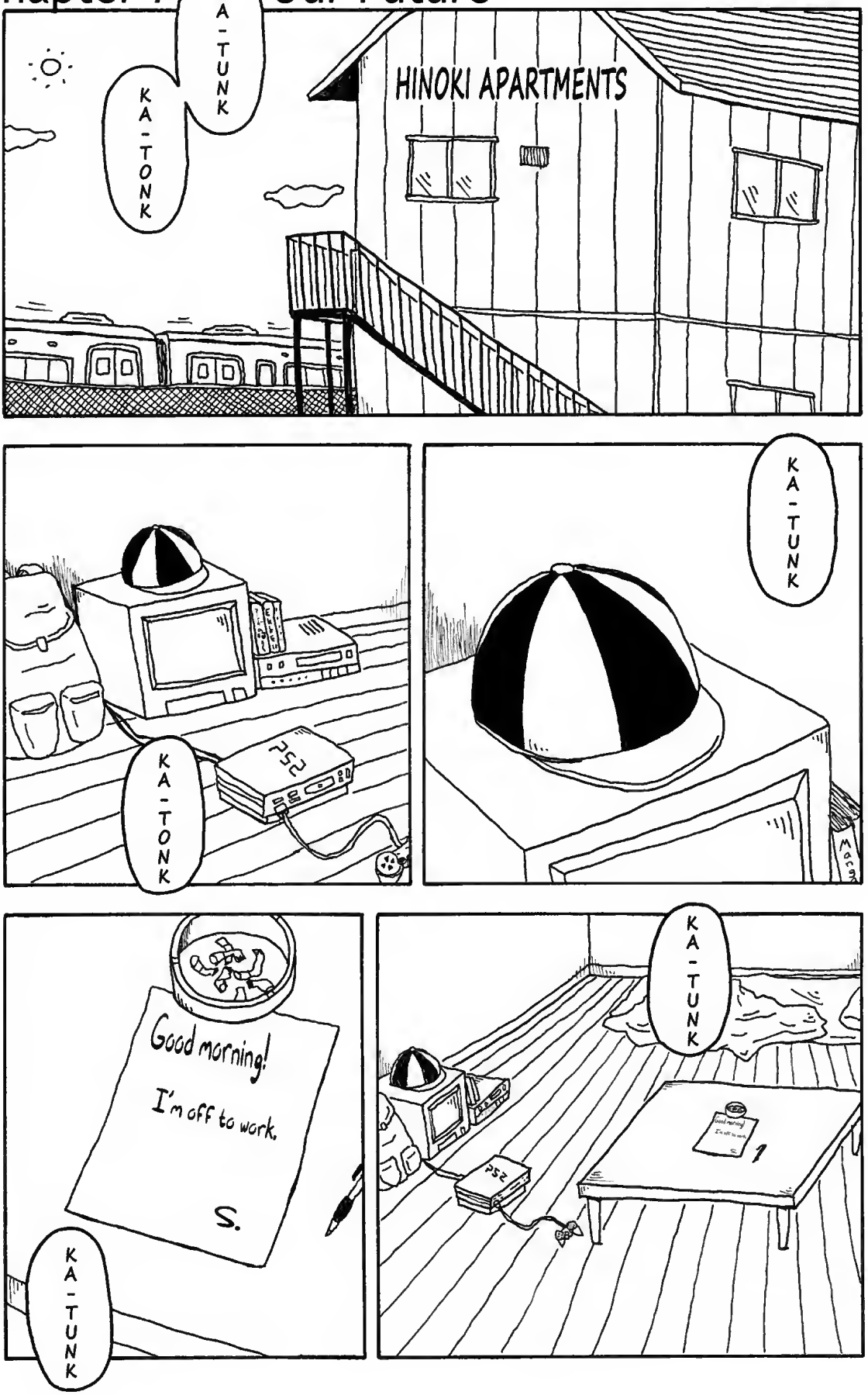
flap
flap
...
nok!
nFF
...
nok
CHAK
nok
nok
nok
...
tch!
...
CHAK


MIND IF I COME IN?
4649
Fashion Center


RATTA KATTA
RATTA KATTA
RATTA
...
HINO

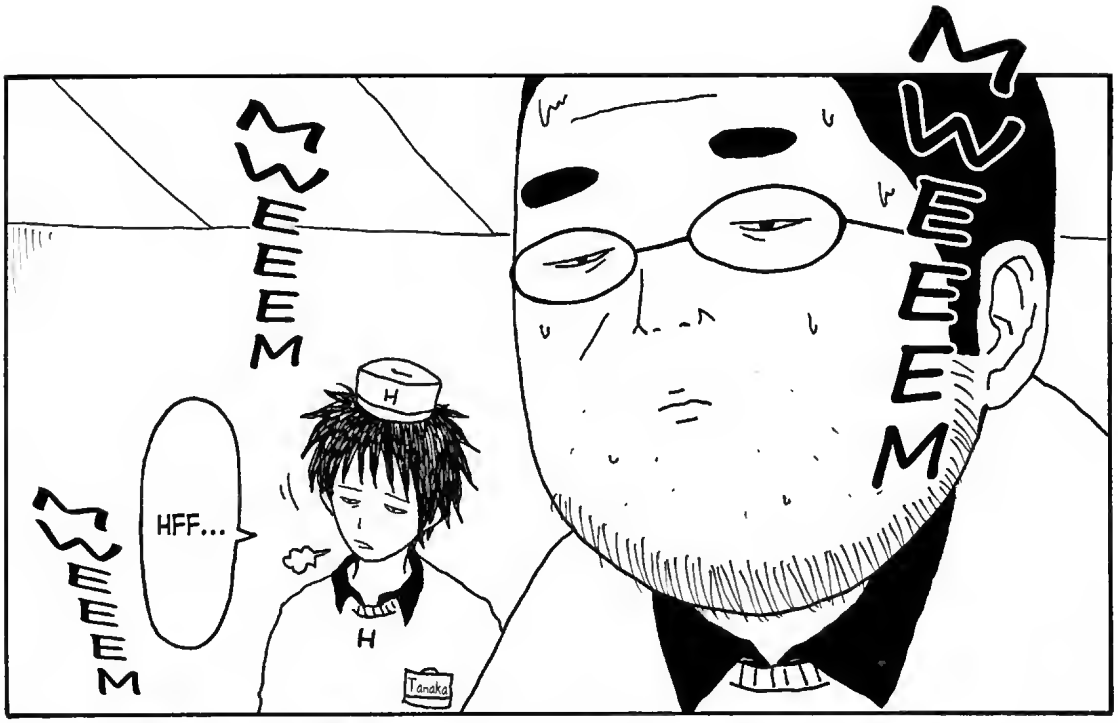
KRCH
KRCH
...

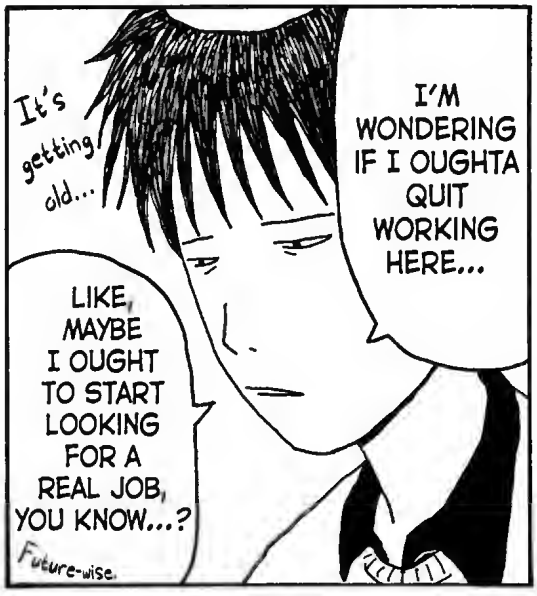
Chapter 7 Our Future

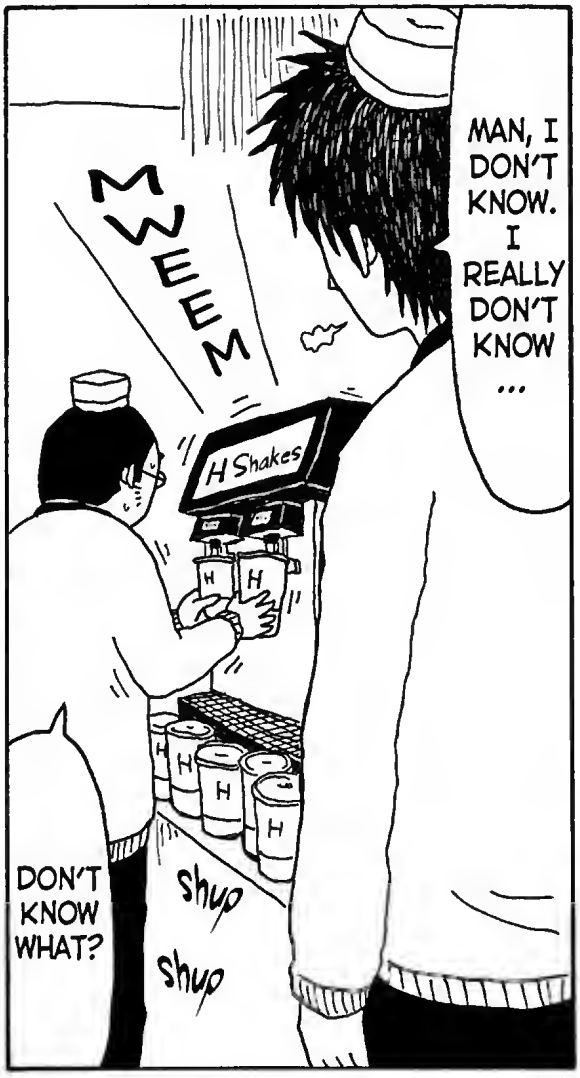


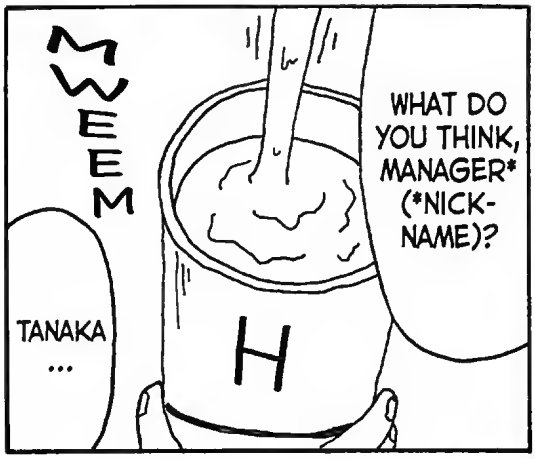
...

Chapter 7:
Our Future


MWEEM
MWEEM
MWEEM
HFF...
H
H
Tanaka


It's getting old...
I'M WONDERING IF I OUGHTA QUIT WORKING HERE...
LIKE, MAYBE I OUGHT TO START LOOKING FOR A REAL JOB, YOU KNOW...?
Future-wise.

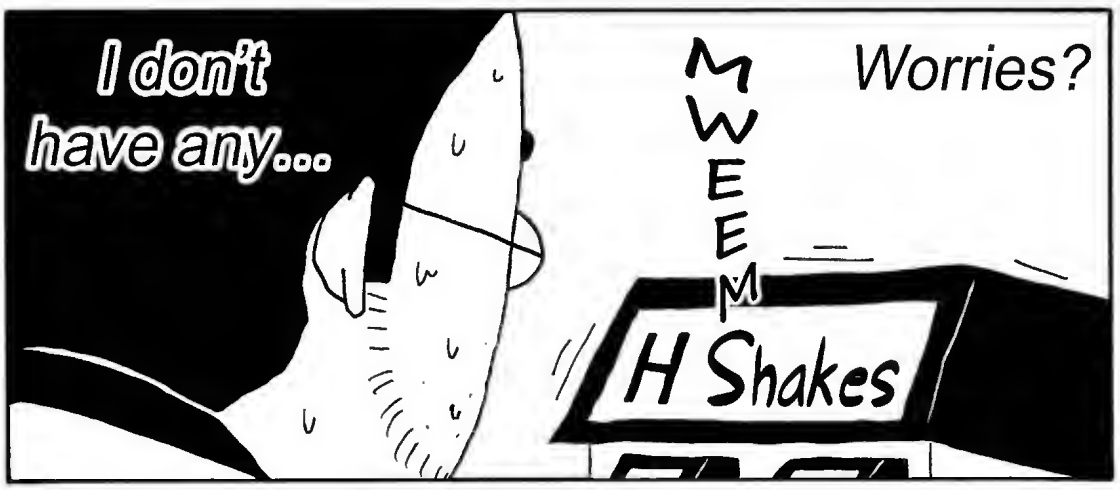

MWEEM
H Shakes
H
H
MAN, I DON'T KNOW. I REALLY DON'T KNOW ...
DON'T KNOW WHAT?
shup
shup


MWEEM
H
WHAT DO YOU THINK, MANAGER* (*NICK-NAME)?
TANAKA ...

hub
bub
Sorry to keep you waiting.
GET TO WORK.
First of all.
H
Oguro

I'm so hurt
I can't work now.
THANKS A LOT, MANAGER ...
I MEAN, JEEZ, DON'T YOU HAVE ANY WORRIES?
H
Tanaka

hub
bub
WHAT ARE YOU, BLIND?! LOOK AT THOSE LINES!
YOU GOT TIME TO WORRY ABOUT QUITTING, USE IT TO FRY UP SOME FRIES, MAN.

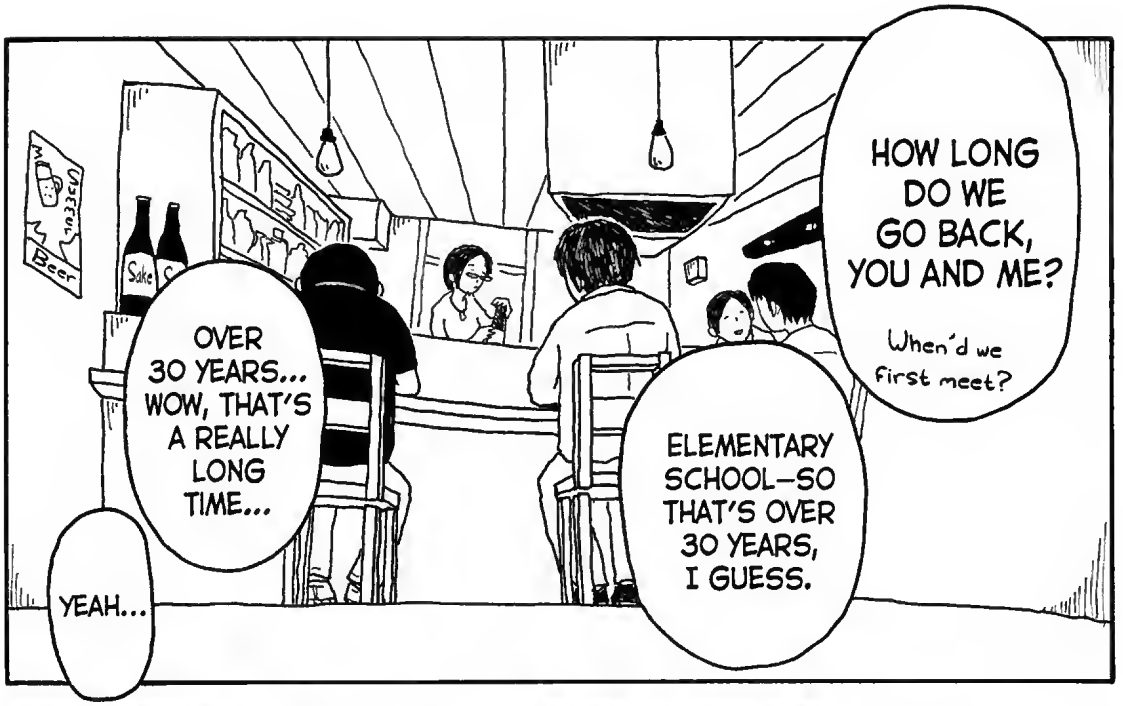

I don't have any...
MWEEM
Worries?
H Shakes

...time or space in my life to think about my worries.
sip
...
Enjoy

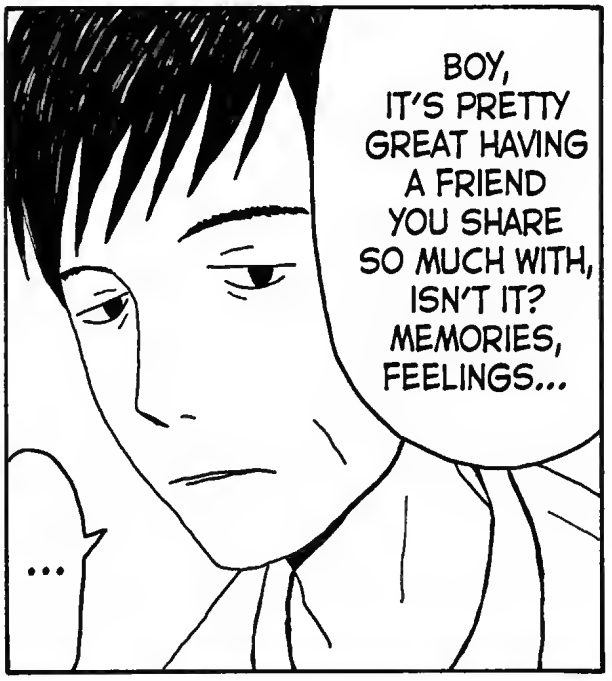
...
glance

HM?
Beer
MIYATA, BUDDY ...

YOU'RE AWFUL QUIET TONIGHT. SOMETHING WRONG?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SHIZUO?
Enjoy


HOW LONG DO WE GO BACK, YOU AND ME?
When'd we first meet?
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—SO THAT'S OVER 30 YEARS, I GUESS.
OVER 30 YEARS... WOW, THAT'S A REALLY LONG TIME...
YEAH...
Beef
Sake

YEAH, IT IS...
It's pretty great.
Mm-hm...
Sip
Sake

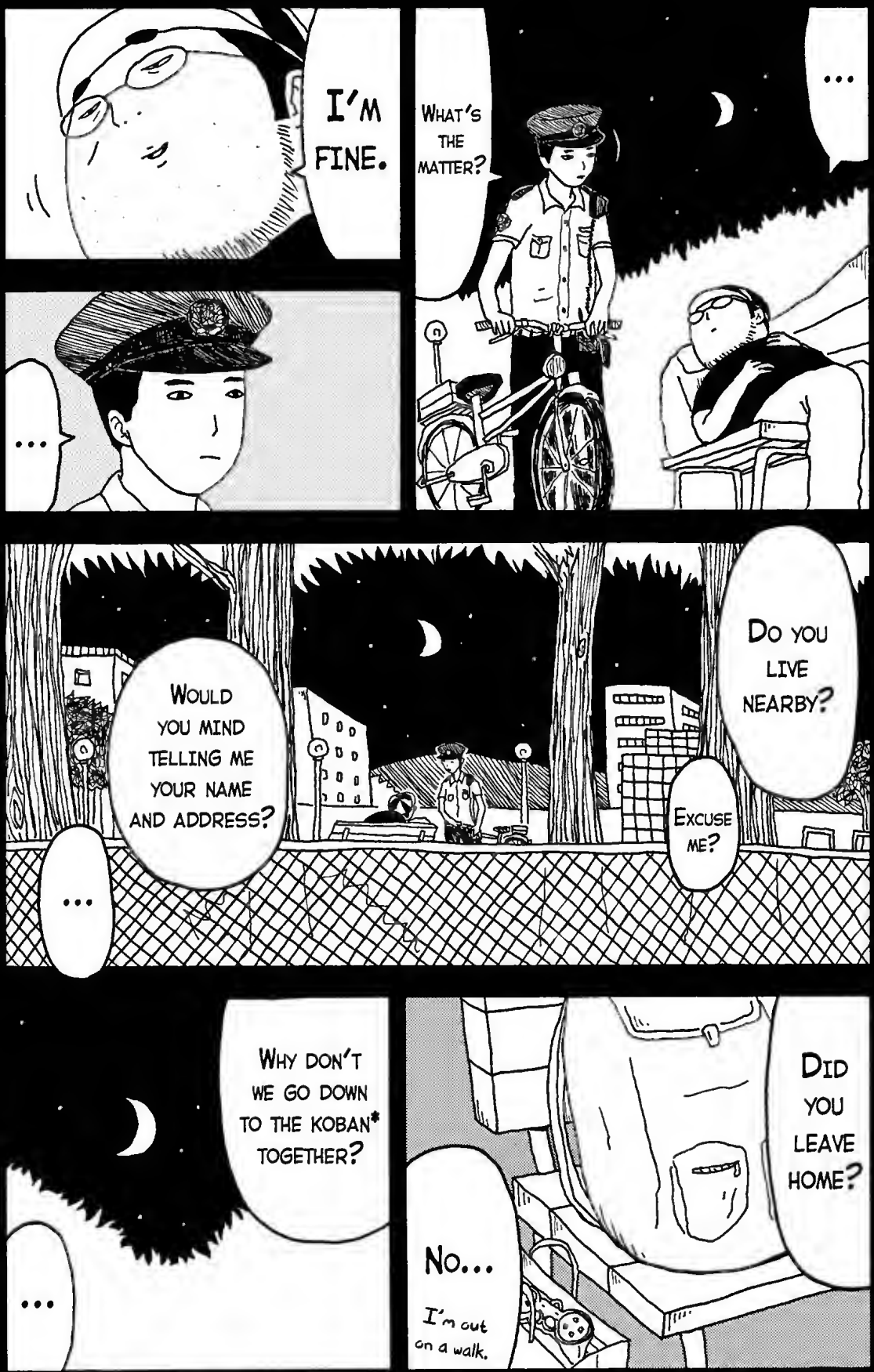

BOY, IT'S PRETTY GREAT HAVING A FRIEND YOU SHARE SO MUCH WITH, ISN'T IT? MEMORIES, FEELINGS...
...

Shizuo...
I THOUGHT SO.
Miyata, old buddy...

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
It's the middle of the night...
I NEED A PLACE TO CRASH.
OH, COME ON. WE DON'T GET INTO FIGHTS...
We're both grown-ups.
That brain of yours, does it function at all?
...
YOU MOVED OUT?
4649
WHAT, YOU GOT INTO A FIGHT WITH YOUR DAD OR SOMETHING?
Fashion Center
IT'S MORE LIKE, WE HAVE DIFFERENT VISIONS?
You know...
What are you, a band?
...

KREE
Let me come in and I'll explain. Okay?
Plus my stuff's really heavy
4649
Well, anyway, we can't stand here talking all night... Right?
KREE
(42)
(42)
No Way!
How come?
Go Home!
How come?!
KREE
KRIK
I'm not being self-conscious!
KRIK
Come on, don't be so self-conscious!
KRIK
Your family's really worried about you! Let go!
Don't look for me... S
No they are not! Let me in!

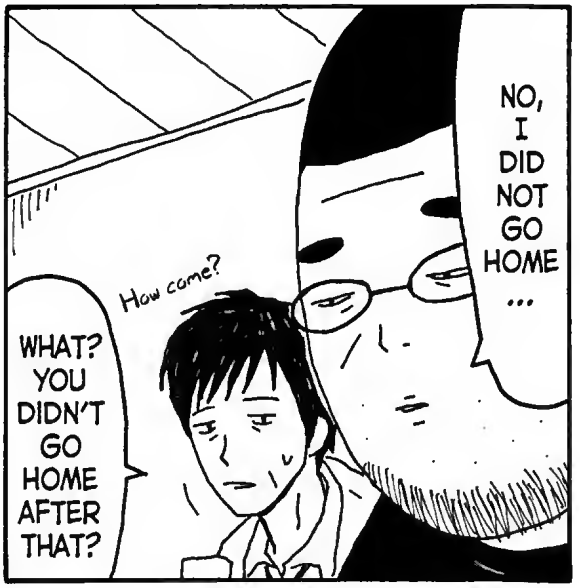
Kiddie Park
...
Trash
GOOD EVENING THERE!
MIYATA, THAT BASTARD ... I won't forget this...
mutter
TCH!
mutter



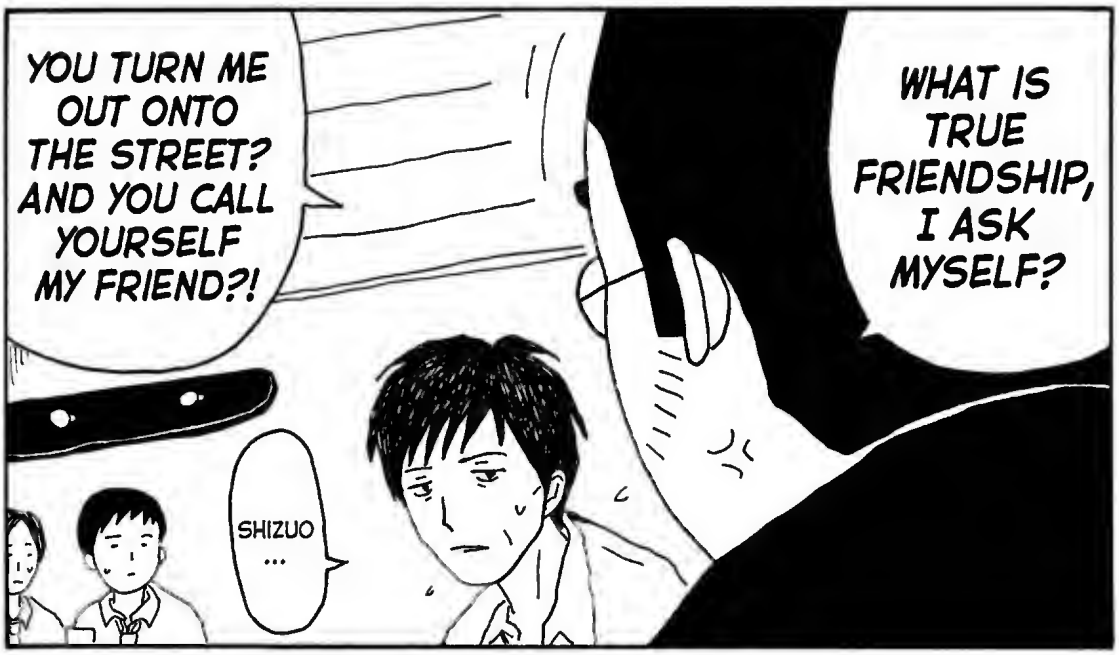
* Also known as a "police box"—there's one in every neighborhood in Japan, staffed by just one or two patrol officers.

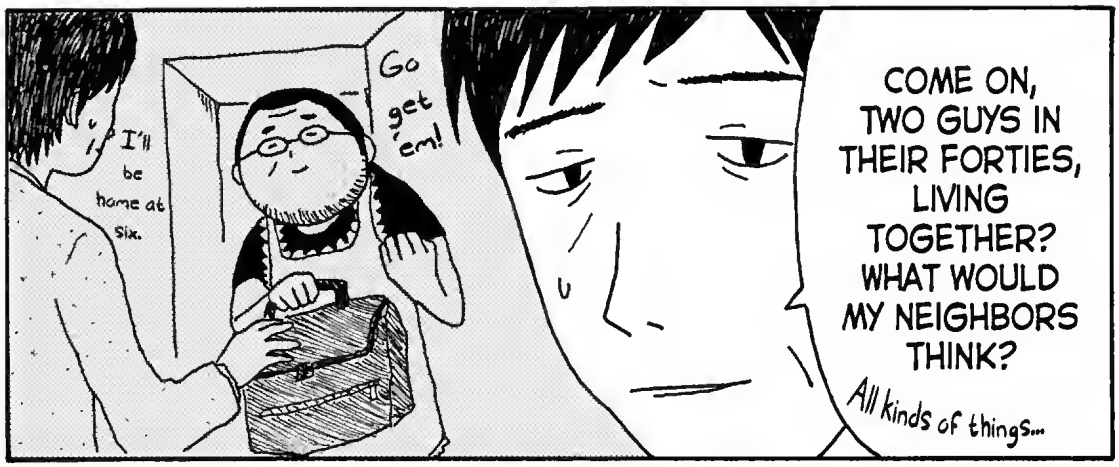
AND THAT'S WHERE I SPENT THE NIGHT, GETTING LECTURED TILL DAWN...
mutter
mutter
By this young cop...
UH-UH, AND THEN WHAT? YOU WENT HOME?
That was a rough night.

You sure you'll get home okay?
Dead
Injure
WELL, JEEZ, I GO HOME AFTER THAT, IT'S LIKE I REALLY *DID* JUST GO OUT FOR A WALK...
Lugging all this heavy stuff around...
SO WHERE ARE YOU STAYING?
Yessir, sorry for the trouble.


NO, I DID NOT GO HOME ...
How come?
WHAT? YOU DIDN'T GO HOME AFTER THAT?

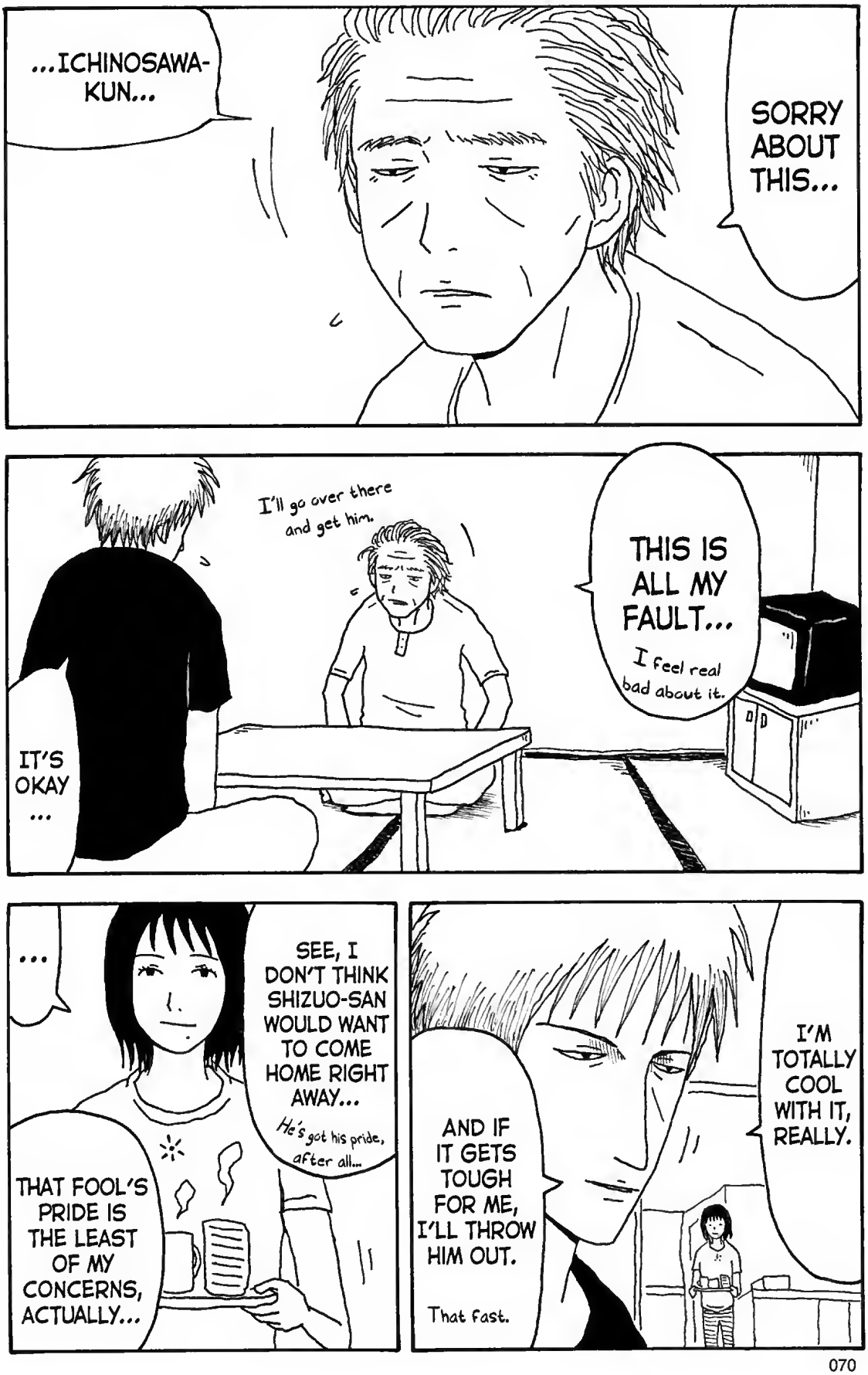
MIYATA, OLD PAL...
What, here...?
MY FRIEND SHUICHI WELCOMED ME WARMLY INTO HIS HOME...
Unlike yourself.

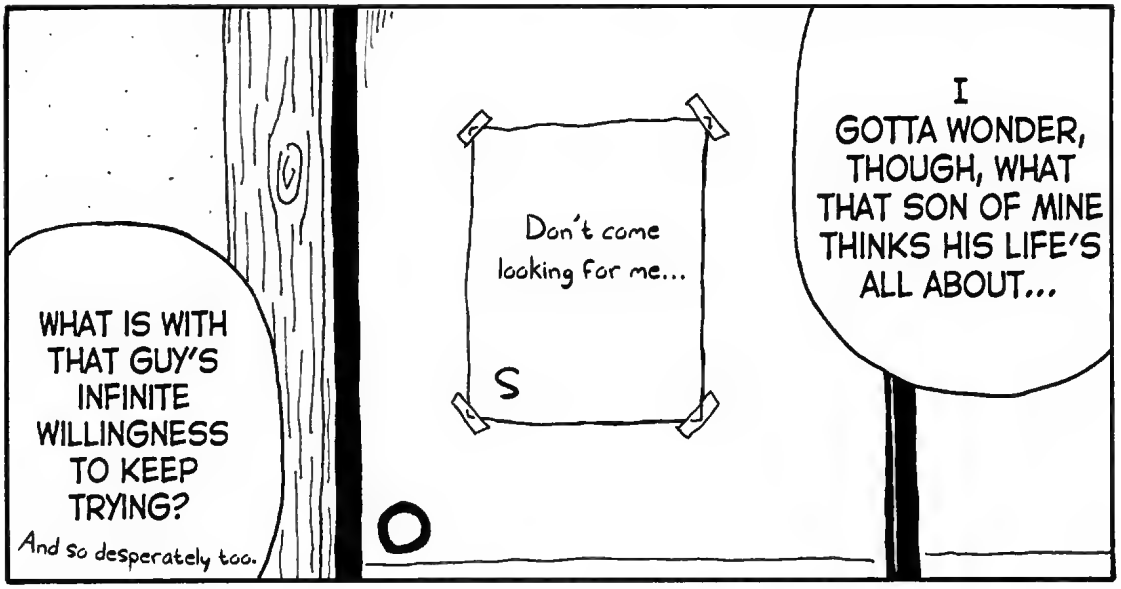

YOU TURN ME OUT ONTO THE STREET? AND YOU CALL YOURSELF MY FRIEND?!
WHAT IS TRUE FRIENDSHIP, I ASK MYSELF?
SHIZUO ...

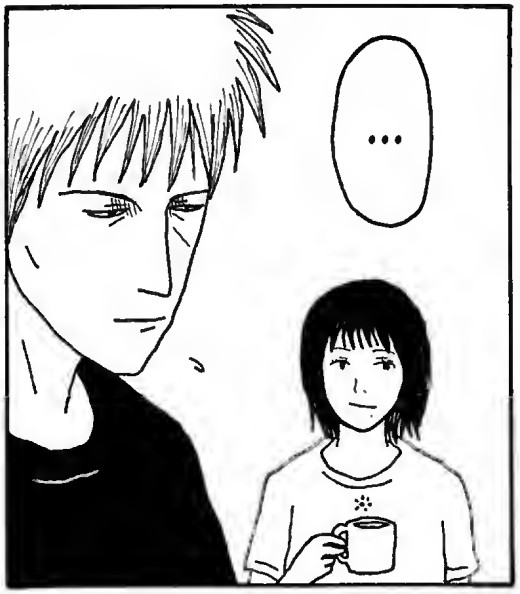

I'll be home at six.
Go get 'em!
COME ON, TWO GUYS IN THEIR FORTIES, LIVING TOGETHER? WHAT WOULD MY NEIGHBORS THINK?
All kinds of things...

Charcoal Grill Hiro
JEEZ, THOUGH, POOR ICHINOSAWA-KUN...
WHADDAYA MEAN?

I CARE ...
Big deal!
WHO CARES ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT?


...ICHINOSAWA-KUN...
SORRY ABOUT THIS...
I'll go over there and get him.
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT...
I feel real bad about it.
IT'S OKAY ...
...
SEE, I DON'T THINK SHIZUO-SAN WOULD WANT TO COME HOME RIGHT AWAY...
He's got his pride, after all...
THAT FOOL'S PRIDE IS THE LEAST OF MY CONCERNS, ACTUALLY...
I'M TOTALLY COOL WITH IT, REALLY.
AND IF IT GETS TOUGH FOR ME, I'LL THROW HIM OUT.
That fast.


WHAT IS WITH THAT GUY'S INFINITE WILLINGNESS TO KEEP TRYING?
And so desperately too.
Don't come looking for me...
S
I GOTTA WONDER, THOUGH, WHAT THAT SON OF MINE THINKS HIS LIFE'S ALL ABOUT...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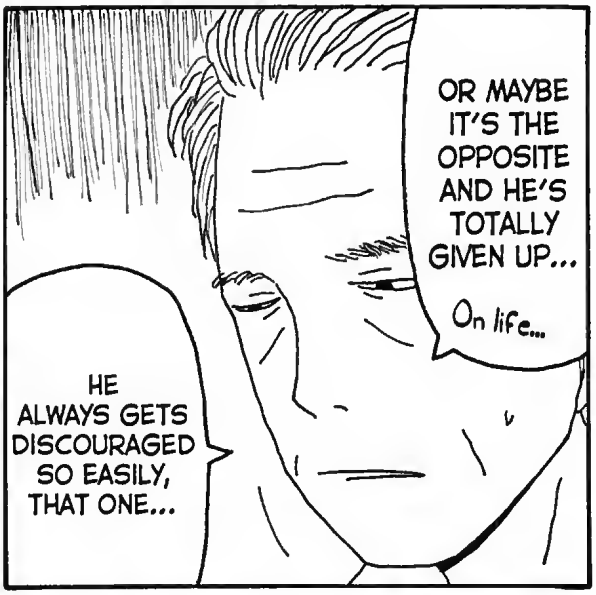
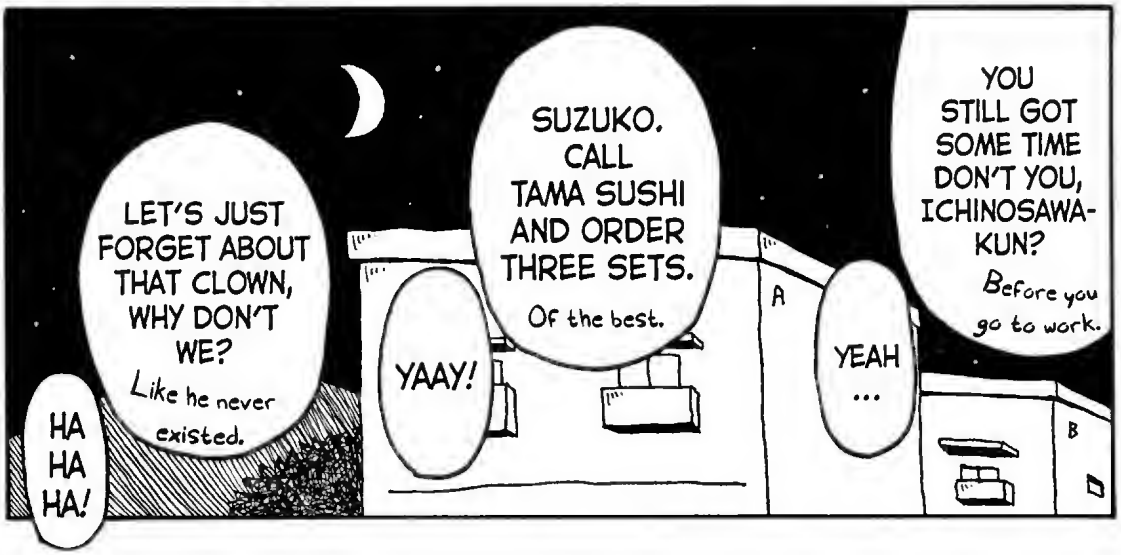
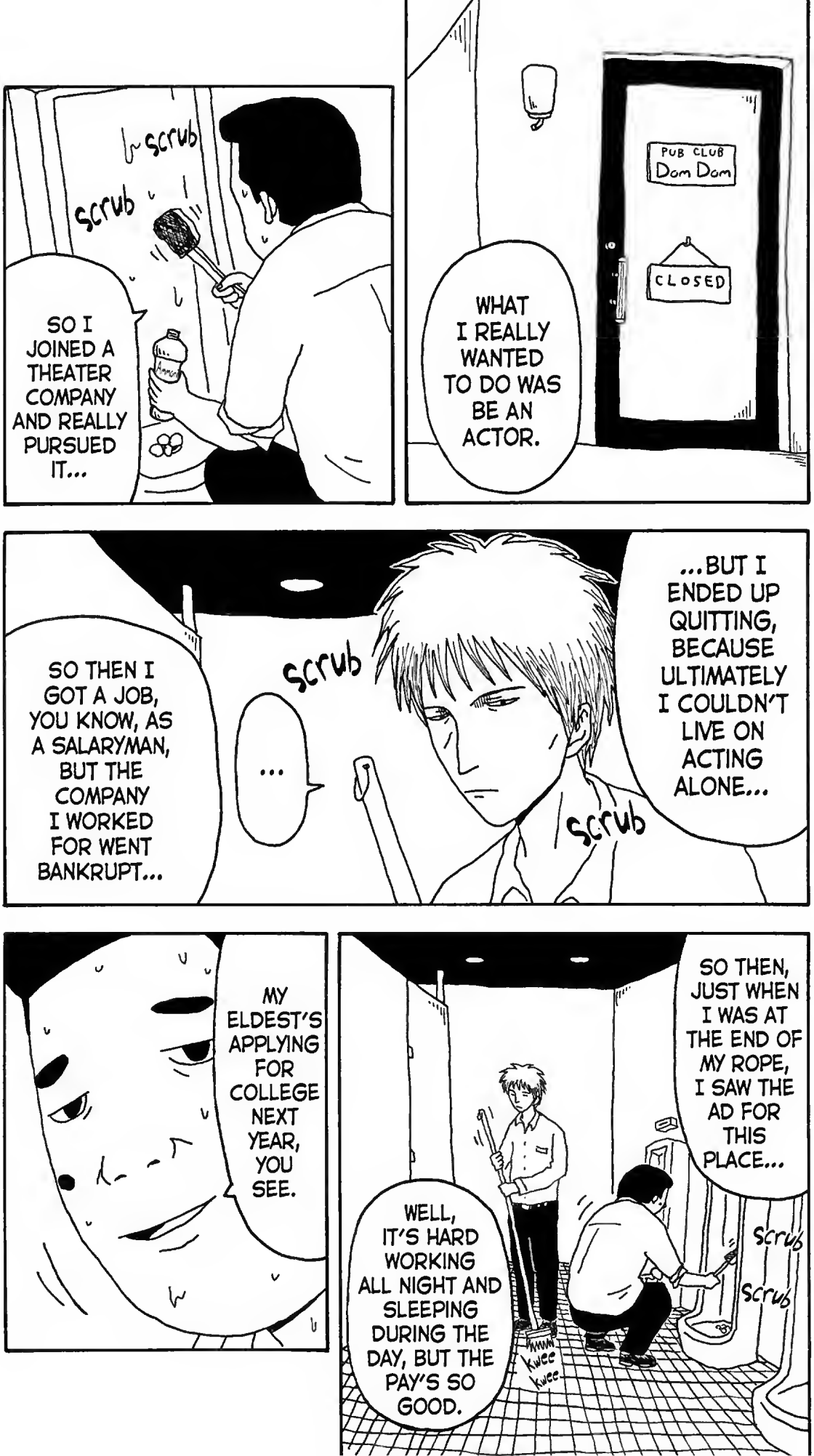
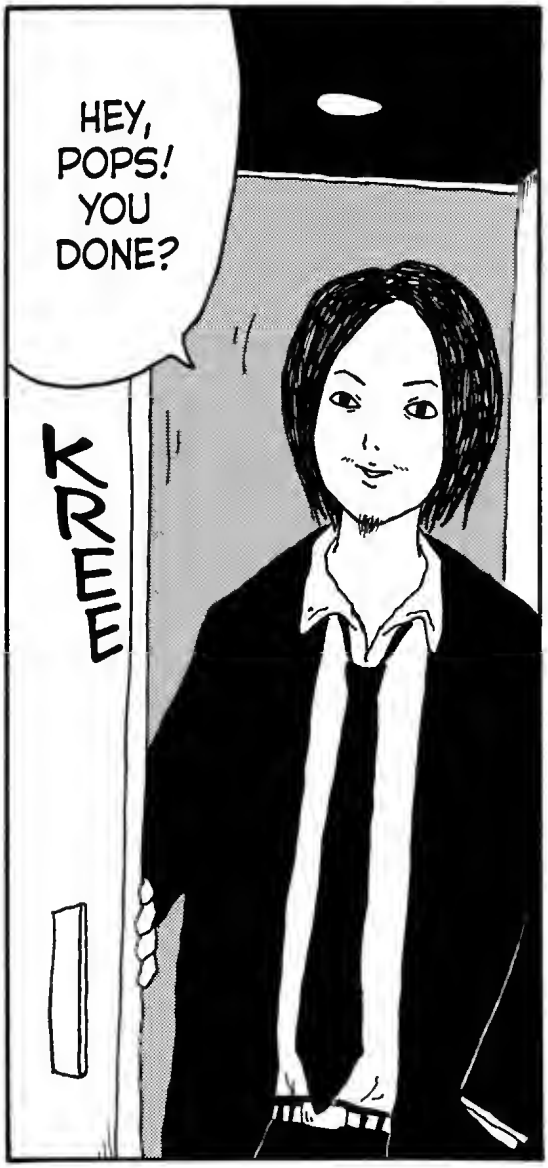

OR MAYBE IT'S THE OPPOSITE AND HE'S TOTALLY GIVEN UP...
On life...
HE ALWAYS GETS DISCOURAGED SO EASILY, THAT ONE...

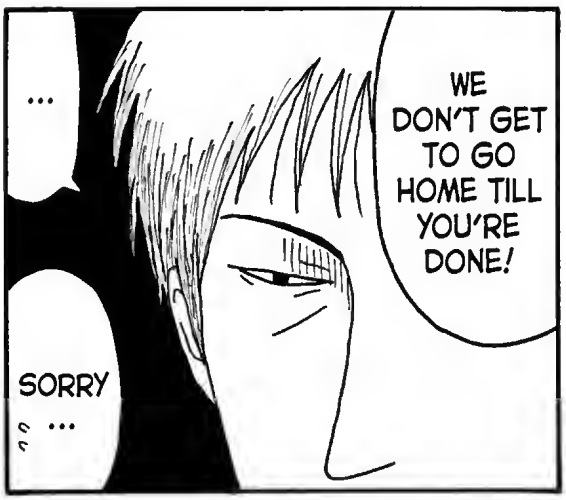

HA HA HA!
LET'S JUST FORGET ABOUT THAT CLOWN, WHY DON'T WE?
Like he never existed.
YAAY!
SUZUKO. CALL TAMA SUSHI AND ORDER THREE SETS.
Of the best.
YEAH ...
YOU STILL GOT SOME TIME DON'T YOU, ICHINOSAWA-KUN?
Before you go to work.
A
B

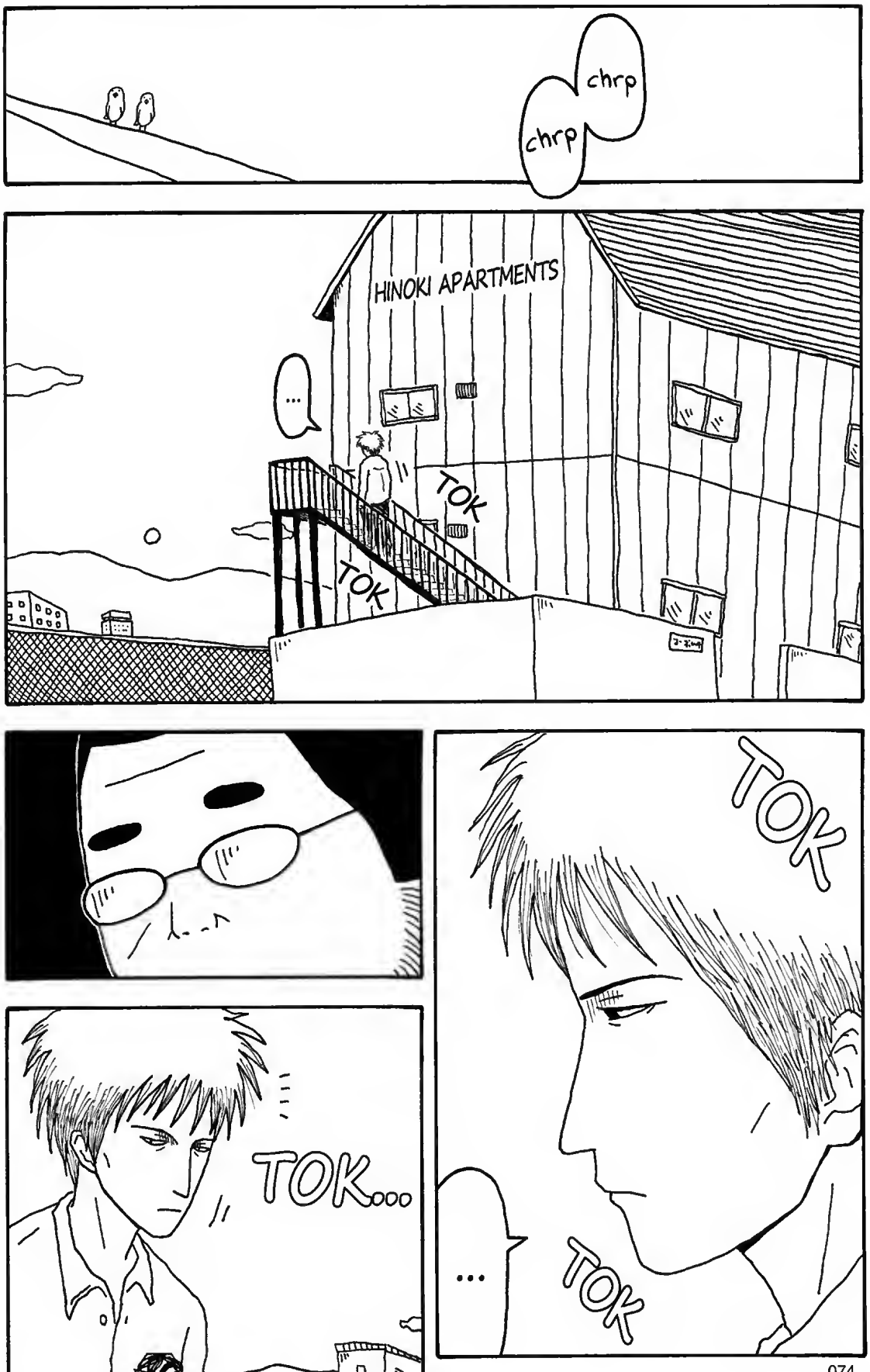

PUB CLUB
Dam Dam
CLOSED
WHAT I REALLY WANTED TO DO WAS BE AN ACTOR.
scrub
scrub
SO I JOINED A THEATER COMPANY AND REALLY PURSUED IT...
...BUT I ENDED UP QUITTING, BECAUSE ULTIMATELY I COULDN'T LIVE ON ACTING ALONE...
scrub
scrub
...
SO THEN I GOT A JOB, YOU KNOW, AS A SALARYMAN, BUT THE COMPANY I WORKED FOR WENT BANKRUPT...
SO THEN, JUST WHEN I WAS AT THE END OF MY ROPE, I SAW THE AD FOR THIS PLACE...
scrub
scrub
Kwee
Kwee
WELL, IT'S HARD WORKING ALL NIGHT AND SLEEPING DURING THE DAY, BUT THE PAY'S SO GOOD.
MY ELDEST'S APPLYING FOR COLLEGE NEXT YEAR, YOU SEE.

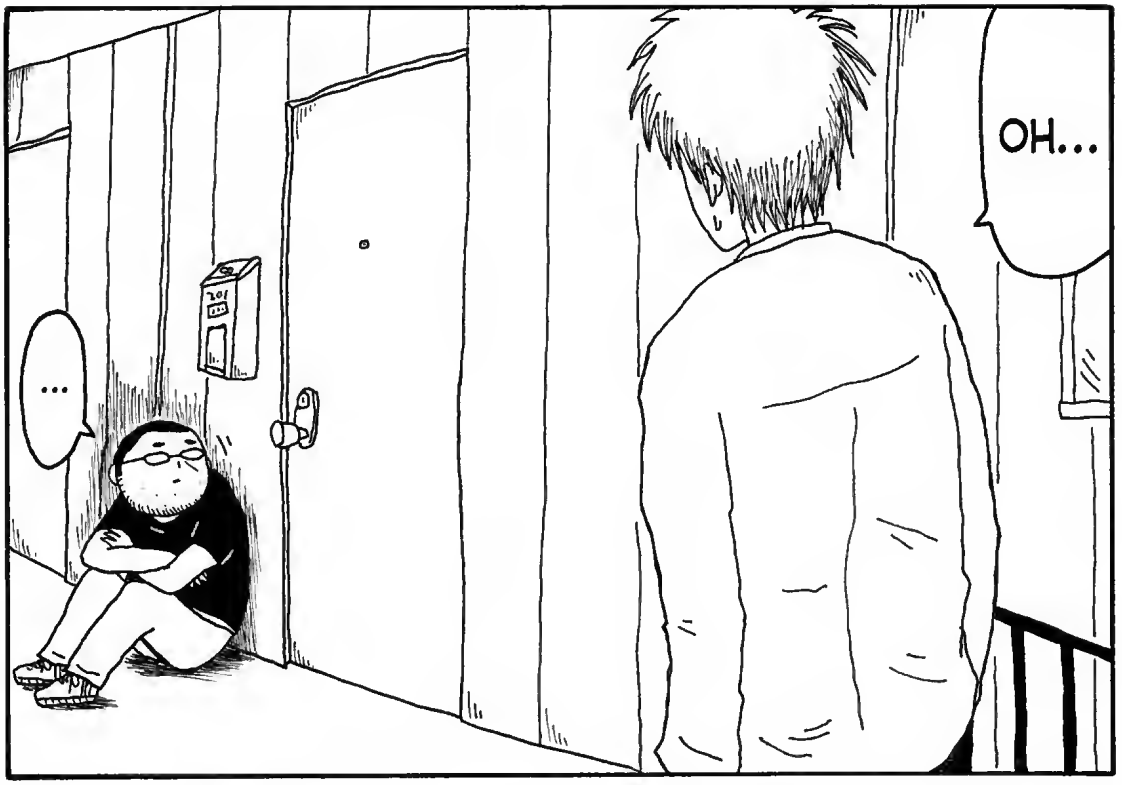
...
I quit my job to draw manga...
So?
Single Parent
SO I NEED TO WORK HARD AND EARN HER TUITION!

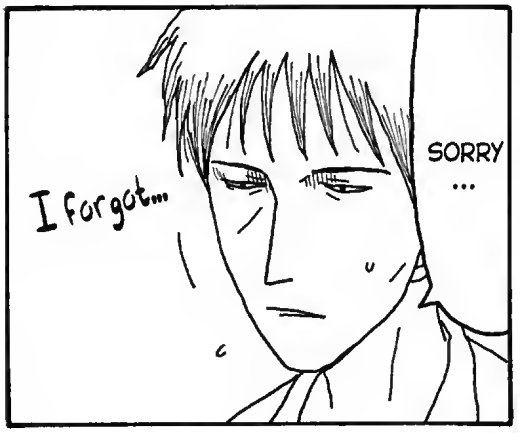
OH, UH, I'LL BE DONE VERY SOON.
WHIZ THROUGH IT, OKAY? ZOOM-ZOOM.

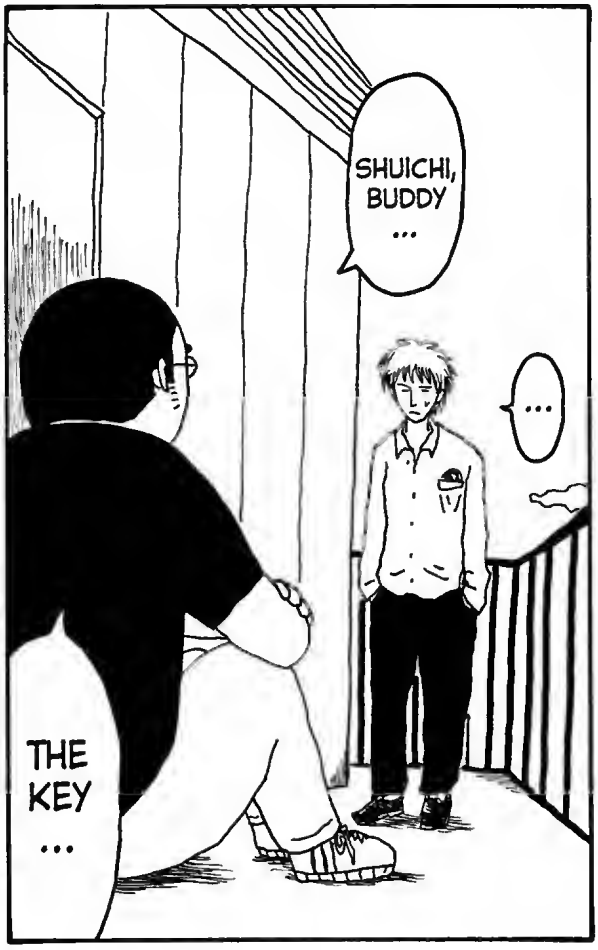

HEY, POPS! YOU DONE?
KREE

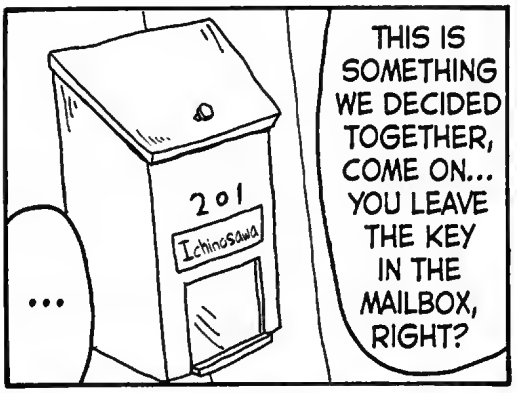

...
WE DON'T GET TO GO HOME TILL YOU'RE DONE!
SORRY ...


chrp
chrp
HINOKI APARTMENTS
...
TOK
TOK
TOK
...
TOK
TOK...


OH...
...

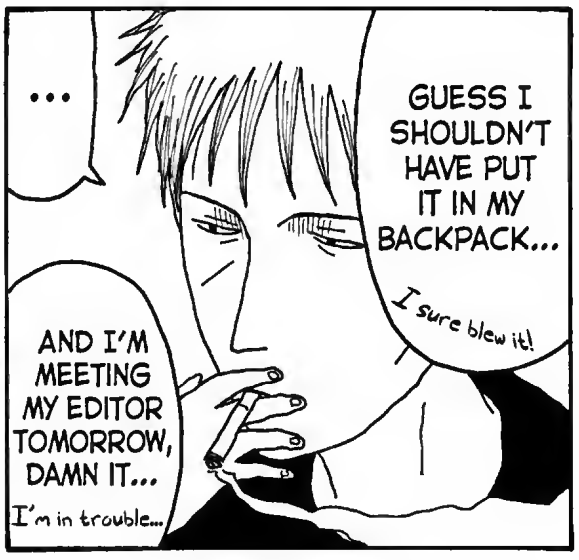

I forgot...
SORRY ...

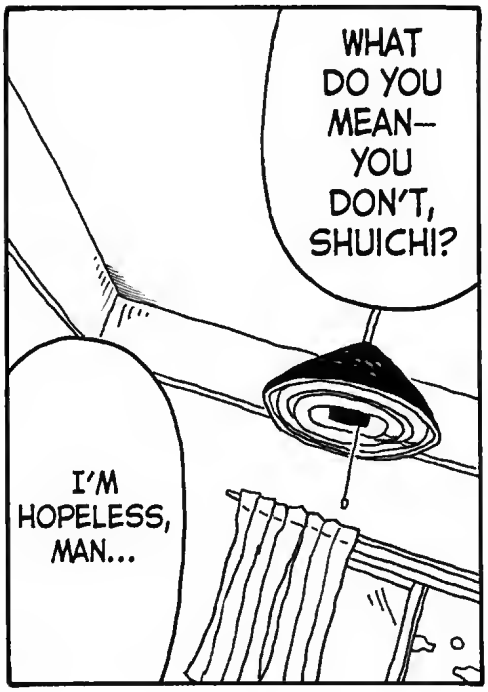

SHUICHI, BUDDY ...
...
THE KEY ...


201
Ichinosawa
...
THIS IS SOMETHING WE DECIDED TOGETHER, COME ON... YOU LEAVE THE KEY IN THE MAILBOX, RIGHT?

MY MANGA'S A TOTAL MESS...
My magnum opus...
tatter
I'm Just Fine
OH GAWD, NOOO!

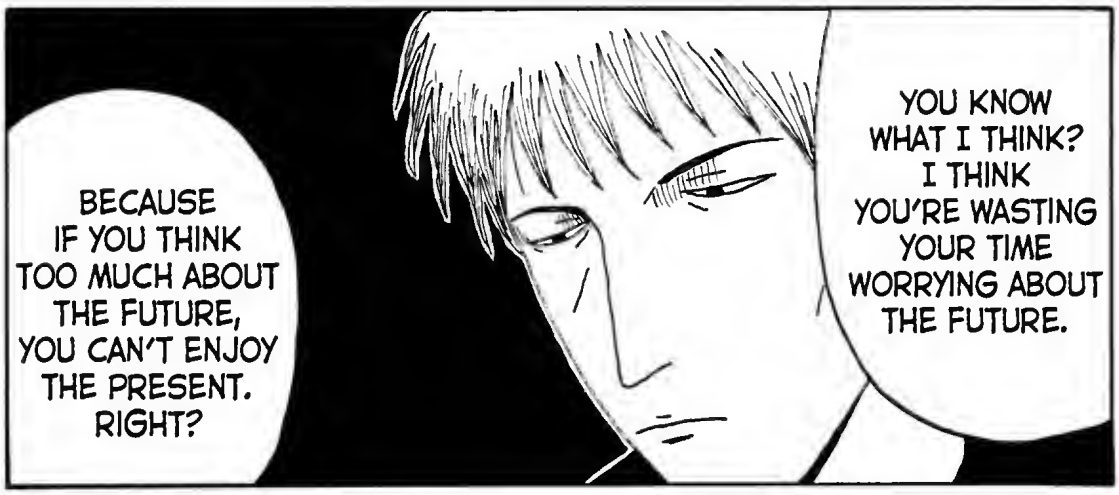
Fresh from bath
mutter mutter
OH WELL, TOO LATE NOW...
GUESS I GOT NO CHOICE.

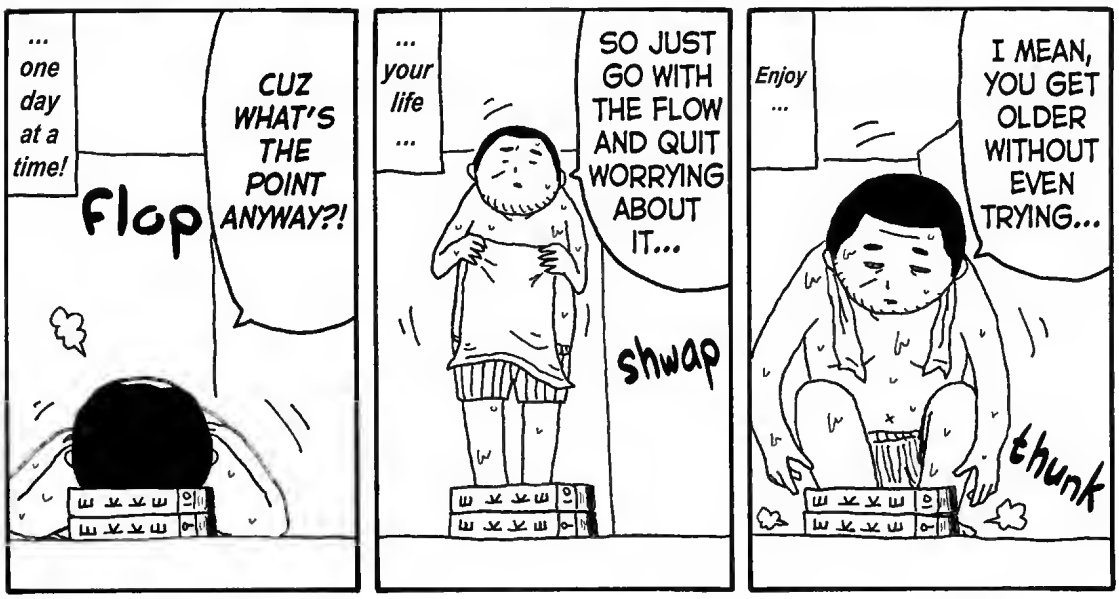

...
GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE PUT IT IN MY BACKPACK...
I sure blew it!
AND I'M MEETING MY EDITOR TOMORROW, DAMN IT...
I'm in trouble...

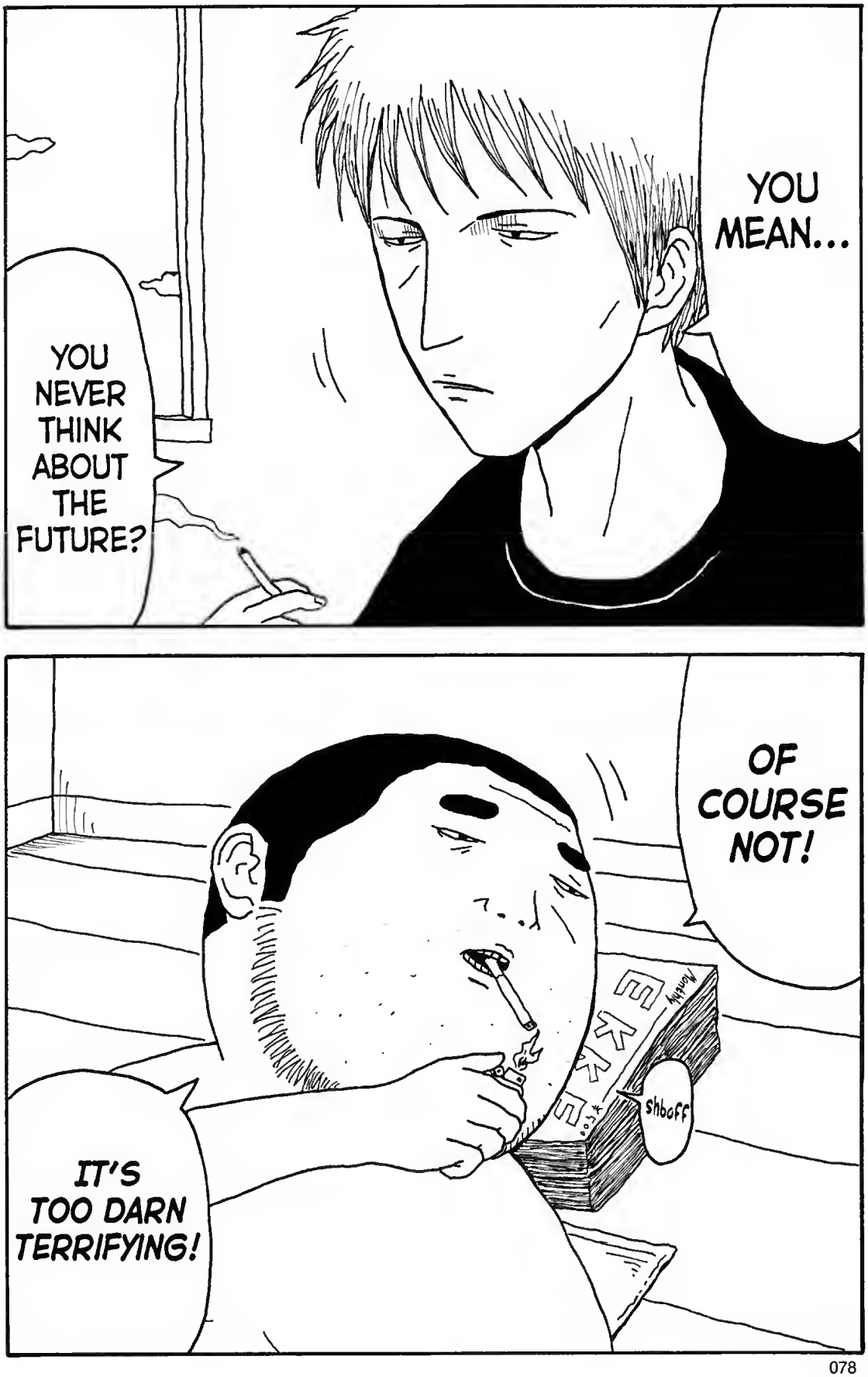

WHAT DO YOU MEAN— YOU DON'T, SHUICHI?
I'M HOPELESS, MAN...

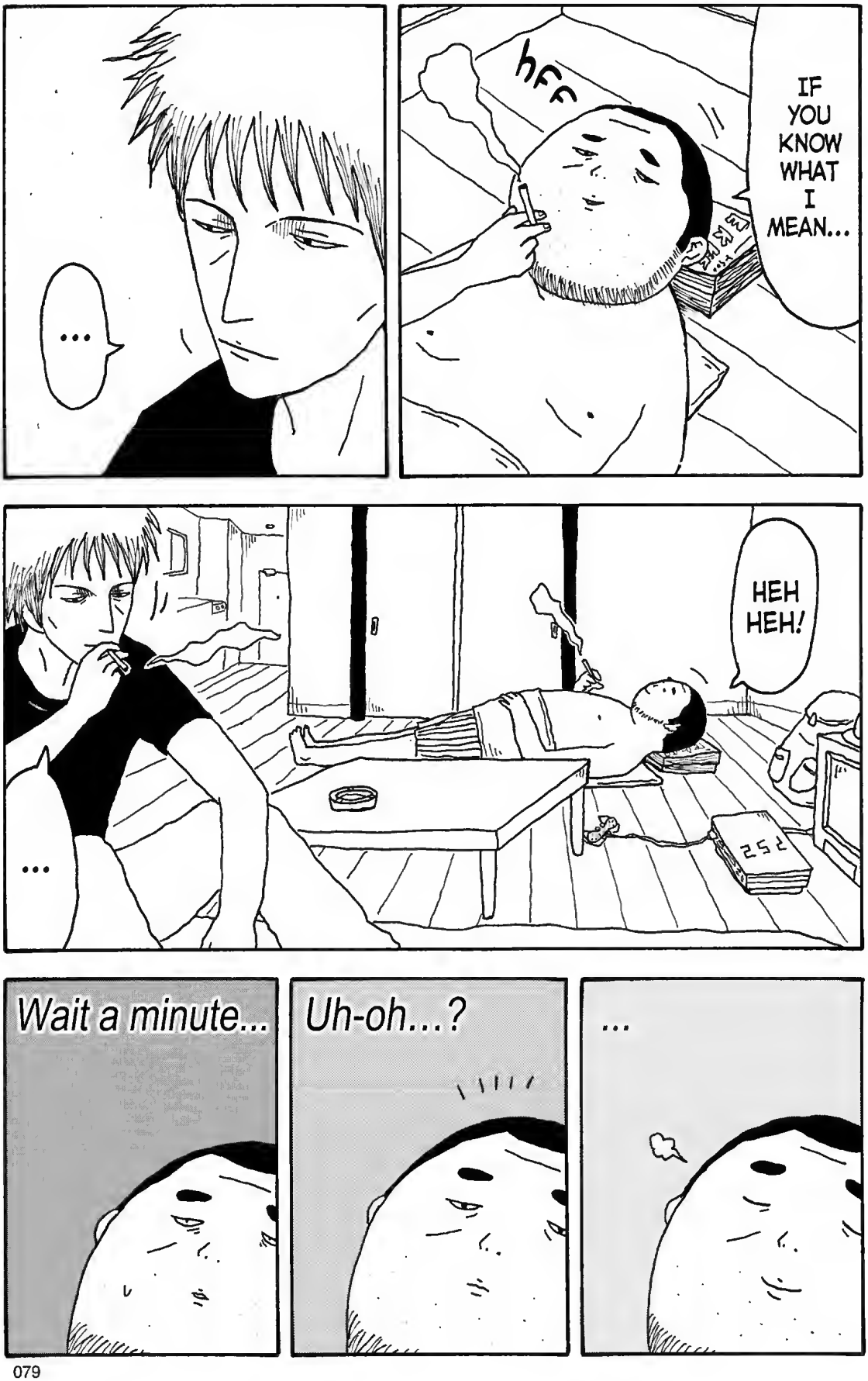
Fresh from bath
?
LUCKY YOU...
...THAT YOU HAVE SOMETHING YOU'RE REALLY INTO...

AND I DON'T REALLY SEE HOW THAT'S EVER GONNA CHANGE...
I DON'T KNOW... I'VE JUST ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS. LIKE, I NEVER LAST AT ANYTHING I EVER DO...
And I'm 26 already...
← Fresh from bath

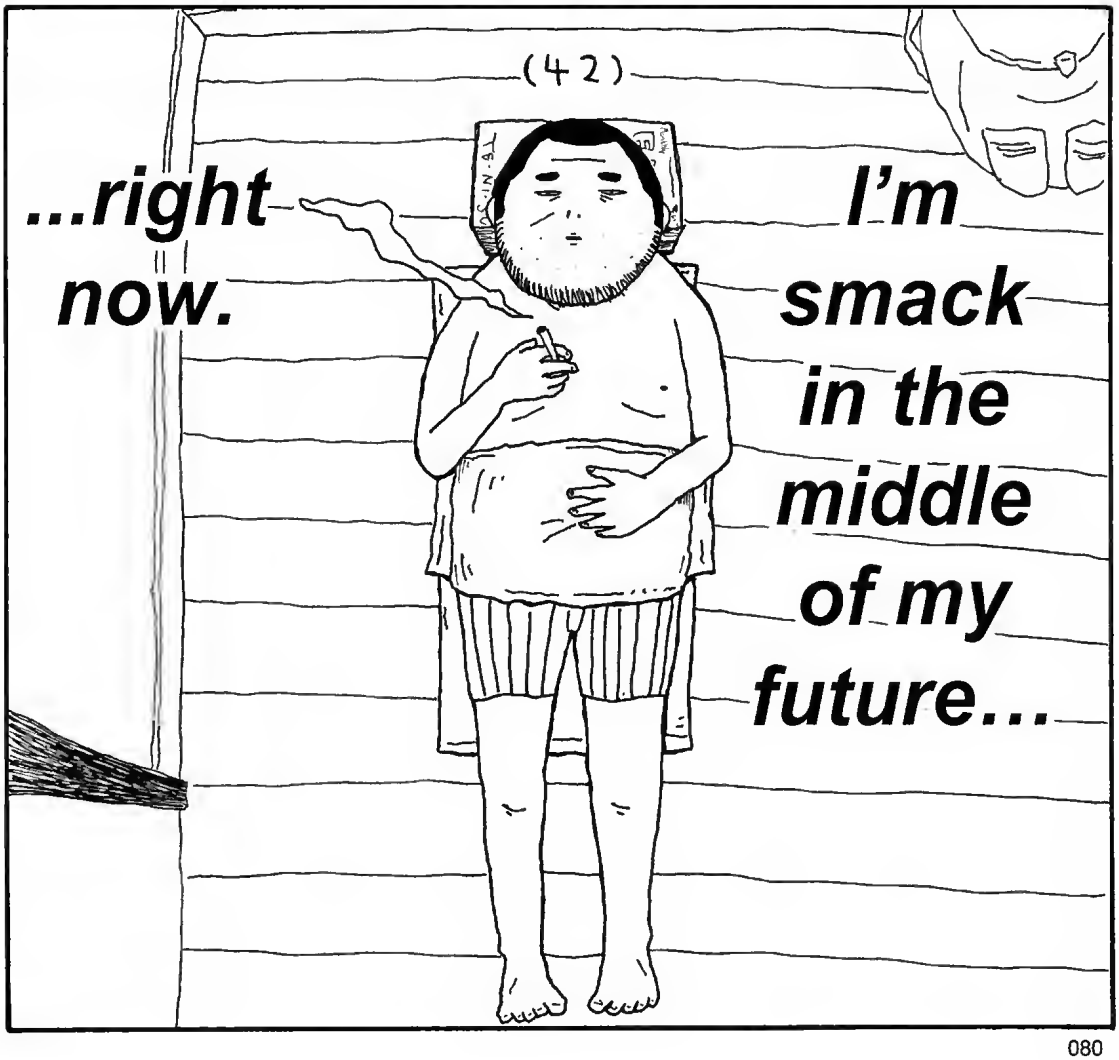

BECAUSE IF YOU THINK TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE, YOU CAN'T ENJOY THE PRESENT. RIGHT?
YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? I THINK YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE.


... one day at a time!
Flop
CUZ WHAT'S THE POINT ANYWAY?!
... your life ...
SO JUST GO WITH THE FLOW AND QUIT WORRYING ABOUT IT...
shwap
Enjoy ...
I MEAN, YOU GET OLDER WITHOUT EVEN TRYING...
thunk

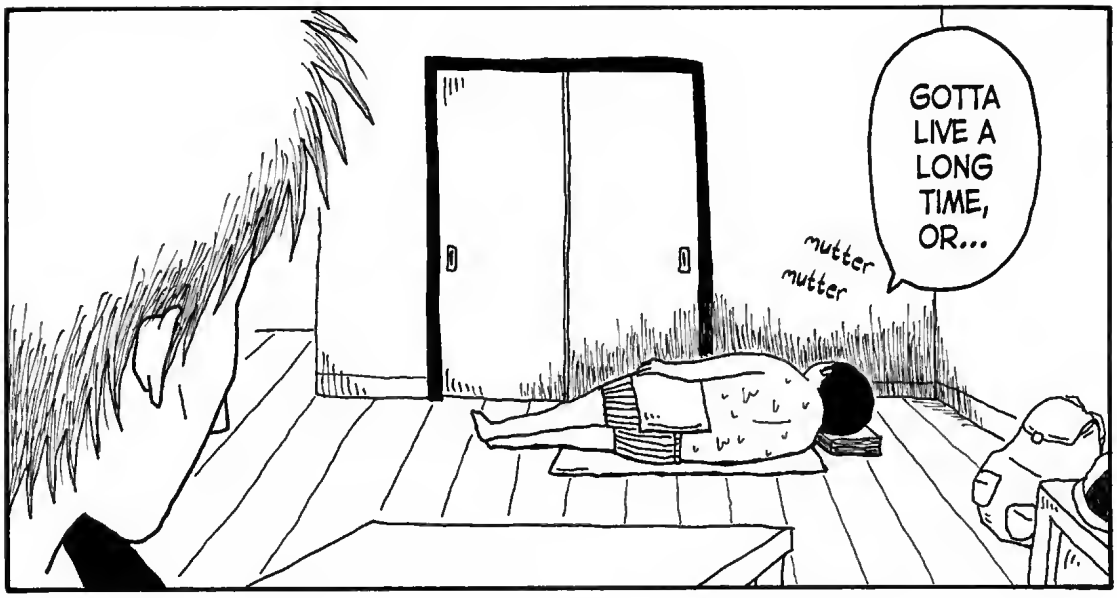

YOU MEAN...
YOU NEVER THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE?
OF COURSE NOT!
IT'S TOO DARN TERRIFYING!
shbaff

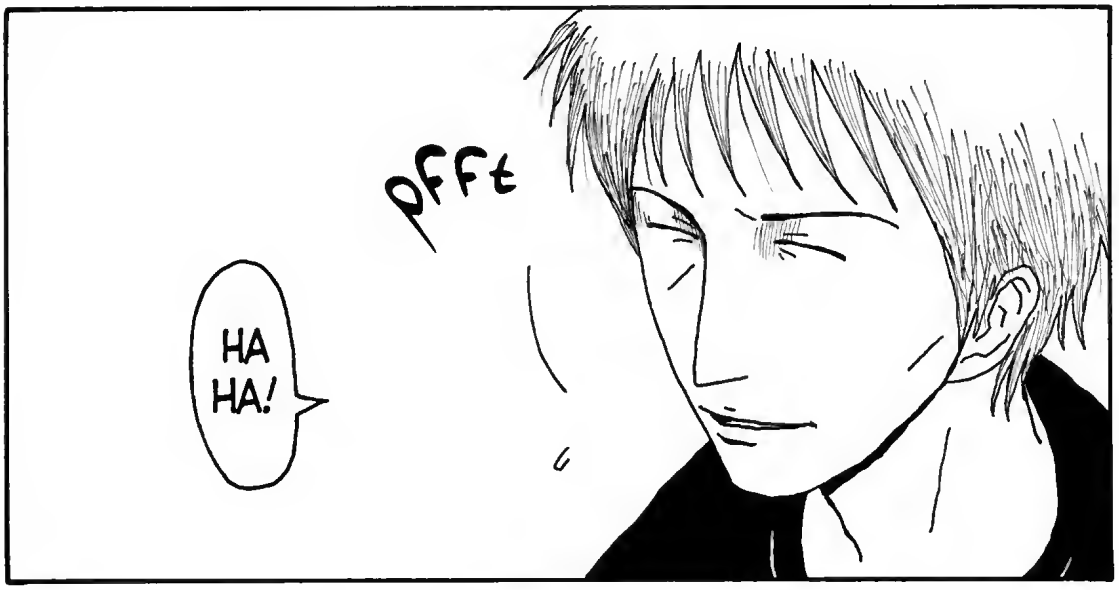

...
hff
IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...
...
HEH HEH!
Wait a minute...
Uh-oh...?
...

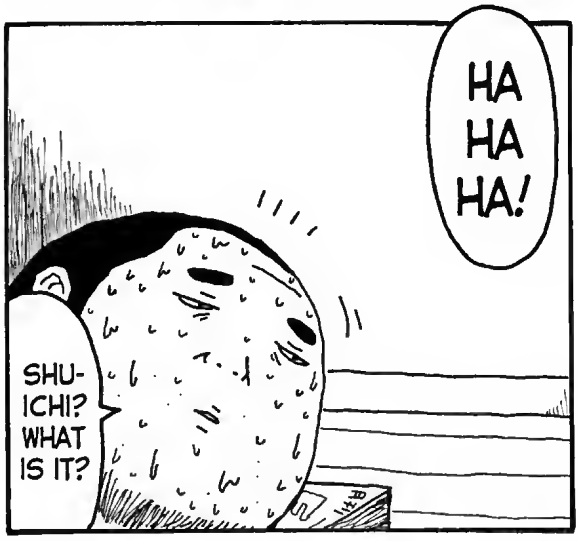
Isn't the future...
...already here?


(42)
...right now.
I'm smack in the middle of my future...

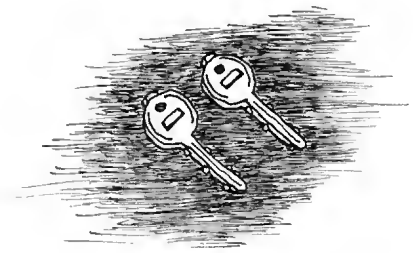
HOPE YOU GET PUBLISHED SOON...
roll
YEAH. ME TOO...
...
mumble
MAYBE I'LL QUIT SMOKING...
?
...
Cuz next thing I know, I'll be an old man...


GOTTA LIVE A LONG TIME, OR...
mutter mutter


pfft
HA HA!

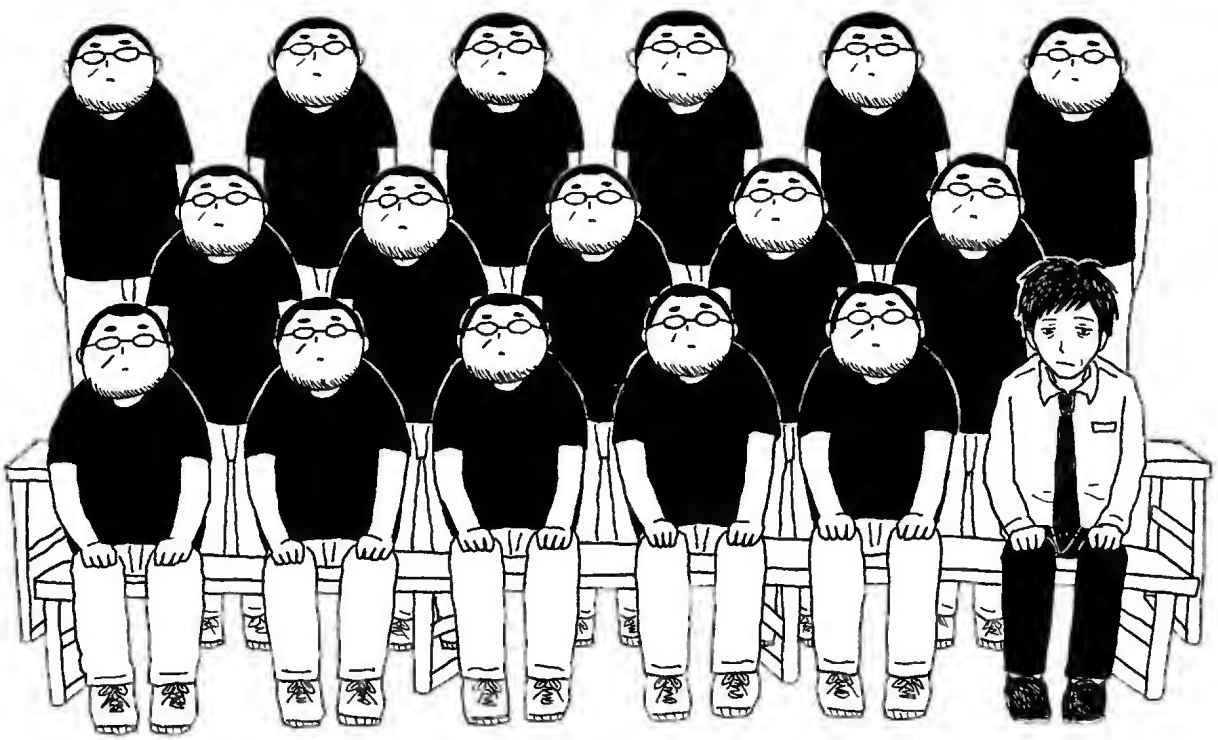

HA HA HA!
SHU-ICHI? WHAT IS IT?

NOTHING ... Ha ha ha!

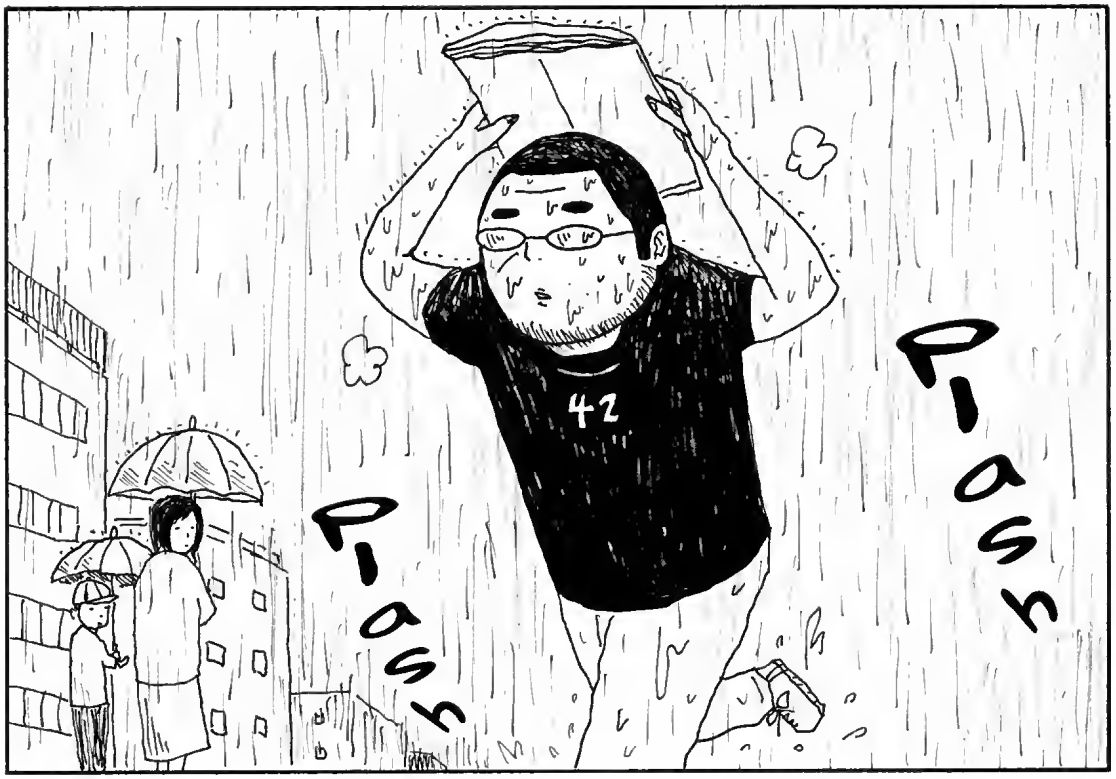


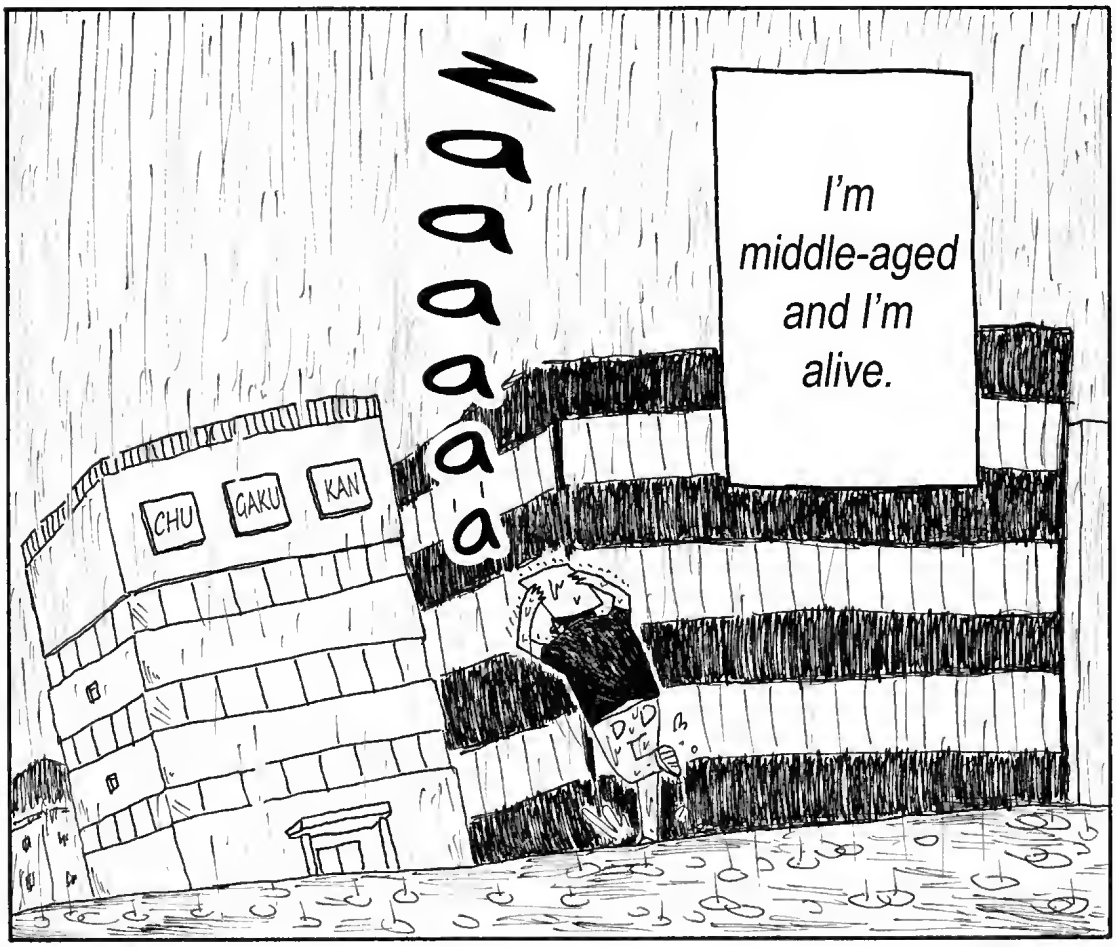
Chapter 8:

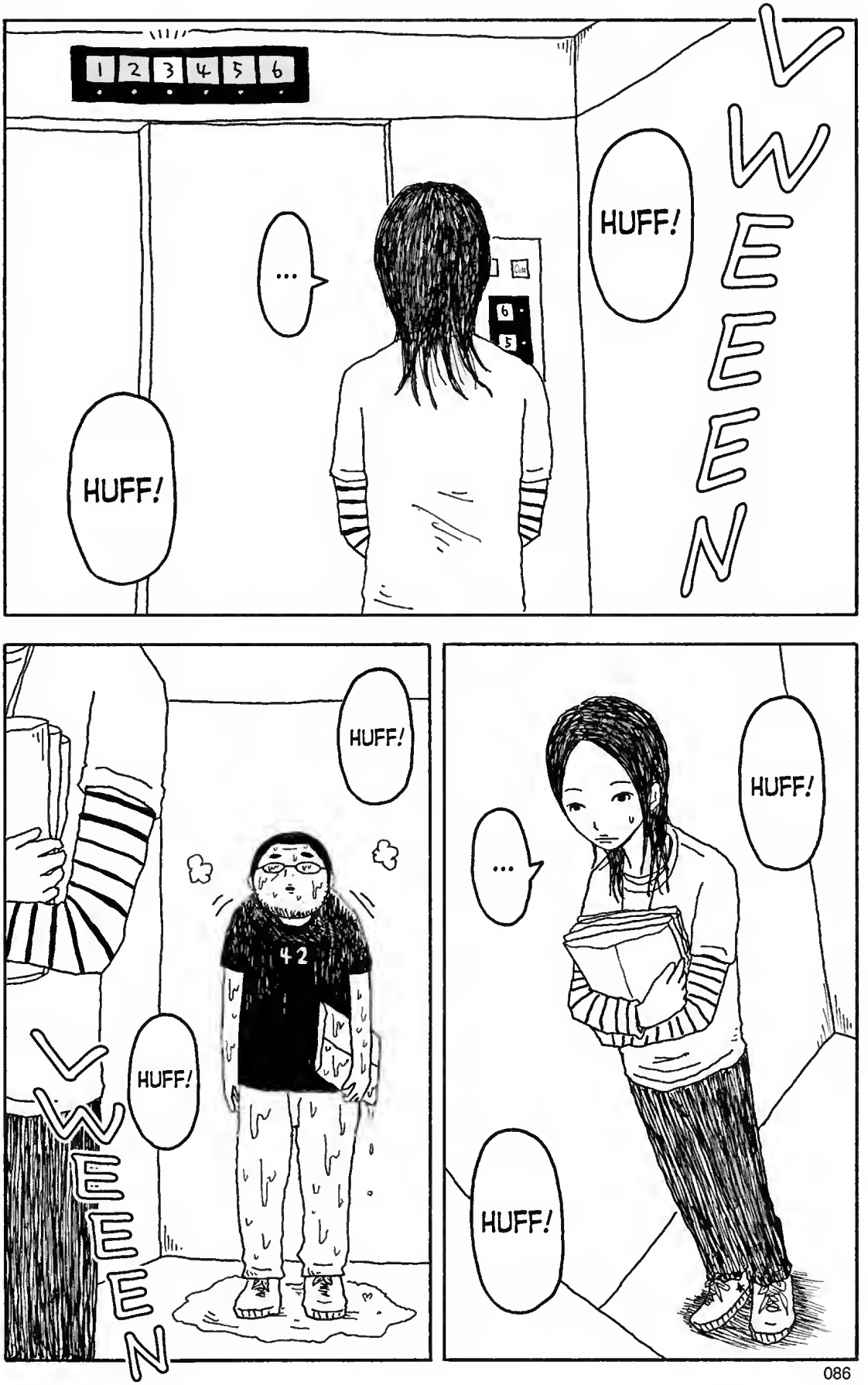
Middle Age 101

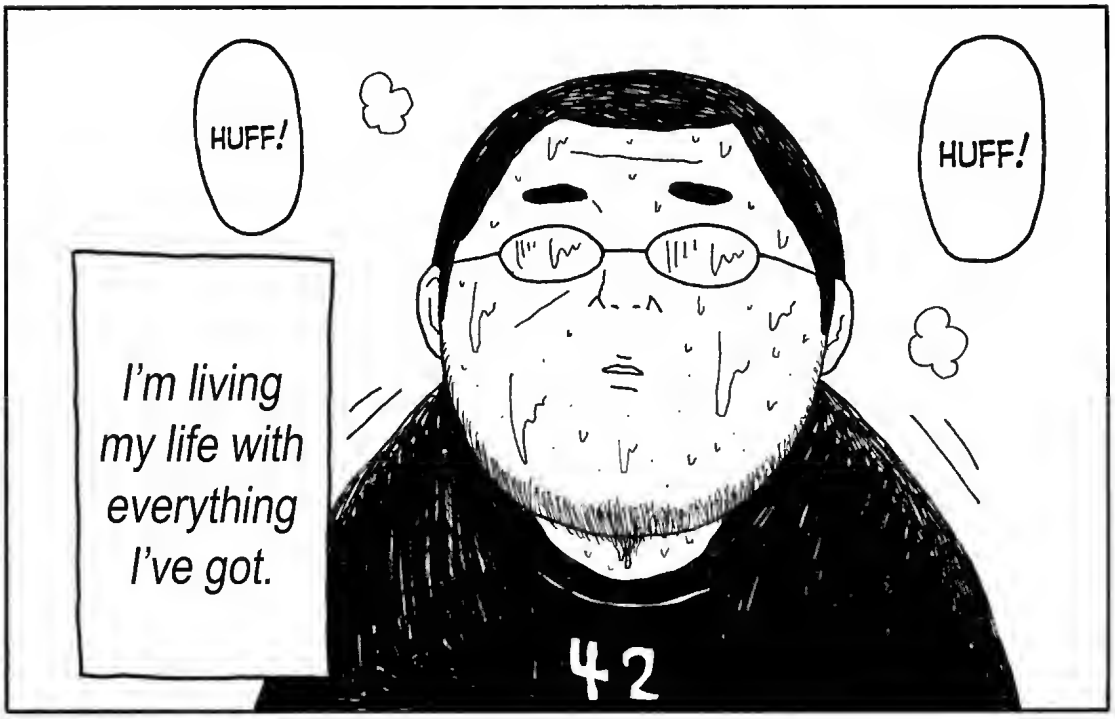


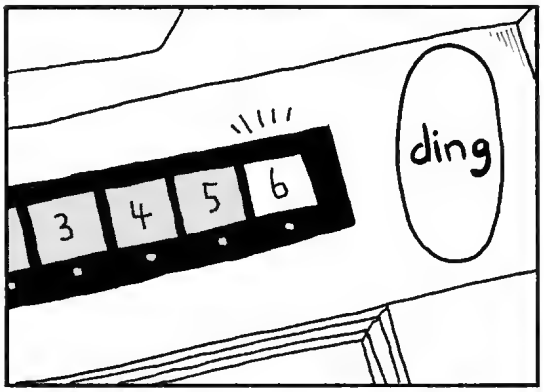
It's raining.
Naaaaa
Plash
I'm running.
Plash
Plash
Plash

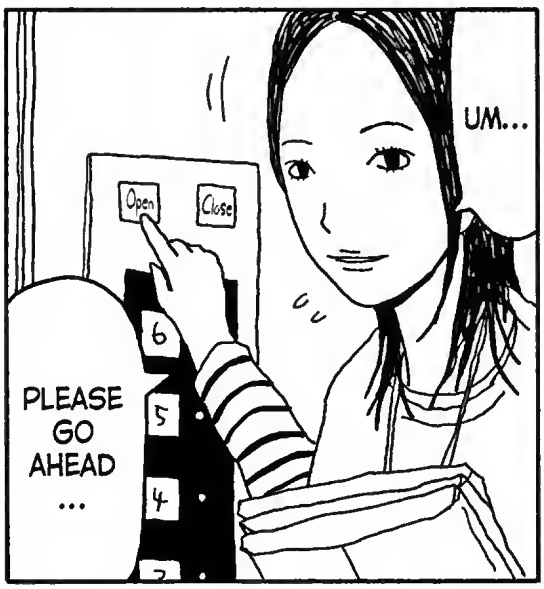

42
Plash
Plash

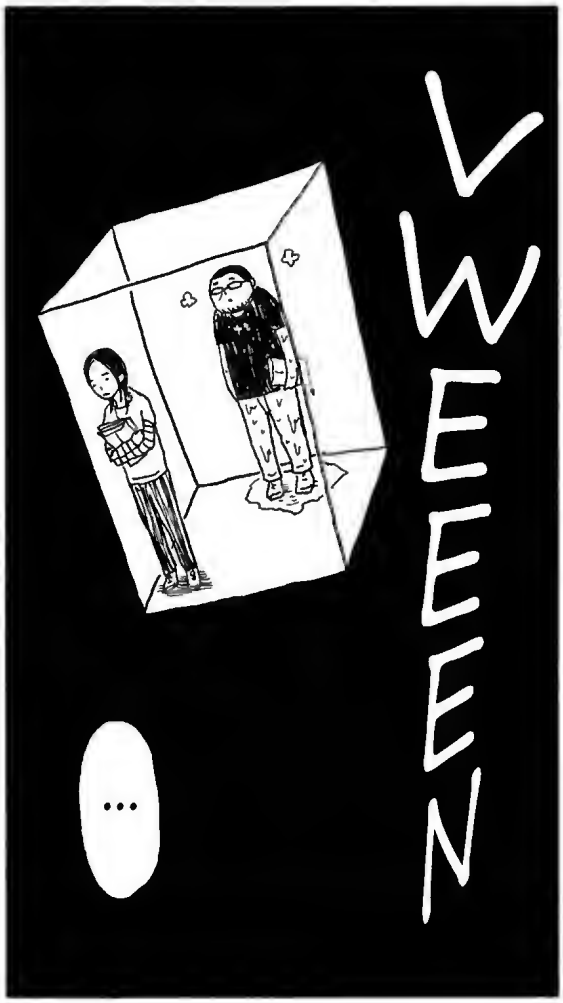

I'm middle-aged and I'm alive.
Aaaaaaa
CHU
GAKU
KAN

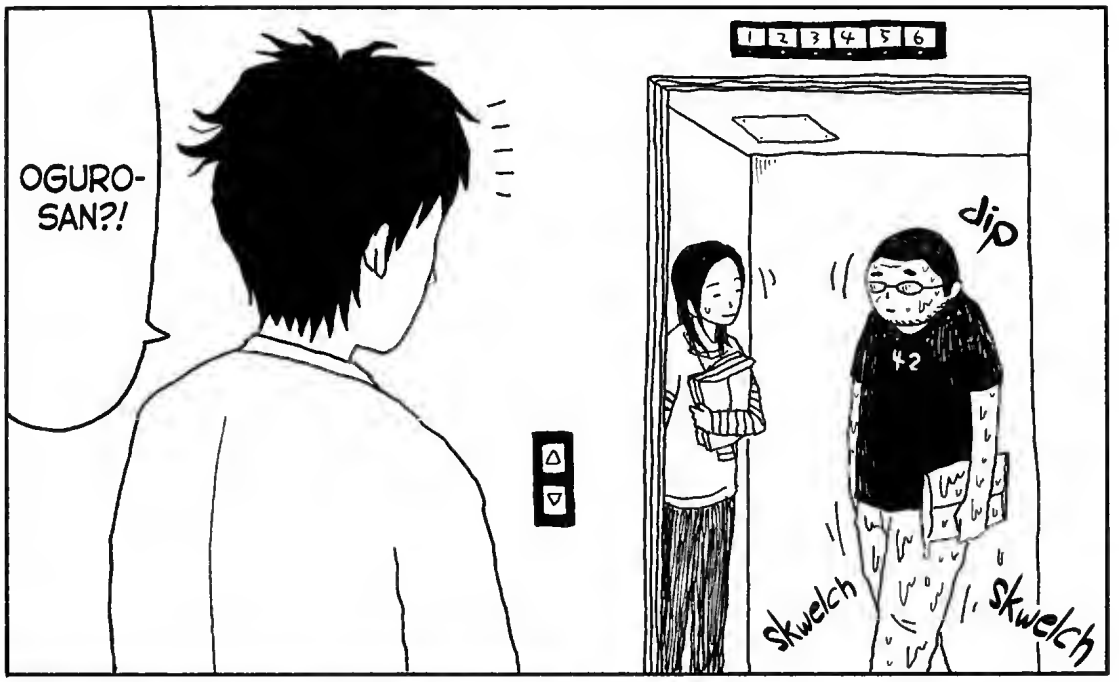

1 2 3 4 5 6
...
HUFF!
HUFF!
VWEEN
HUFF!
HUFF!
42
HUFF!
VWEEN
...
HUFF!
HUFF!


HUFF!
HUFF!
I'm living my life with everything I've got.
42


3
4
5
6
ding

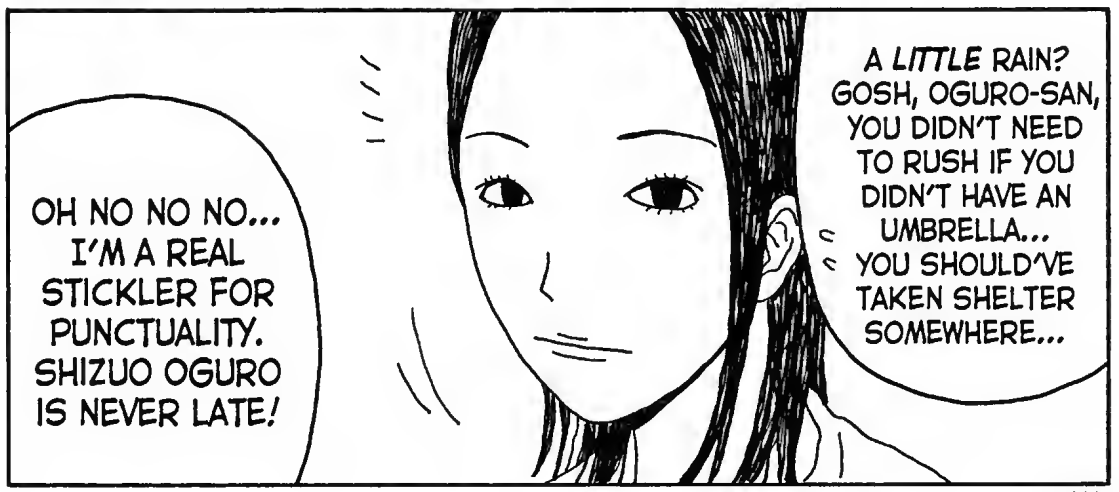

UM...
Open
Close
PLEASE GO AHEAD ...
6
5
4


LWEEN
...


OGURO-SAN?!
1 2 3 4 5 6
dip
42
skwelch
skwelch

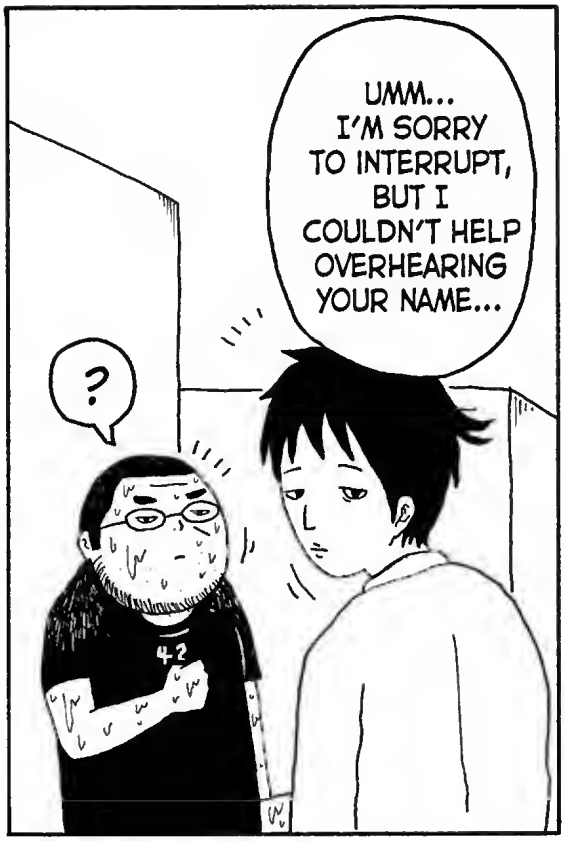
Ha ha!
OH, IT'S NOTHING ...
JUST RAN INTO A LITTLE RAIN...
42

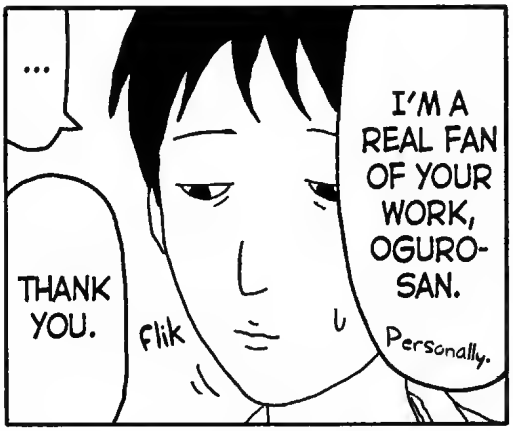
You're soaking wet...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

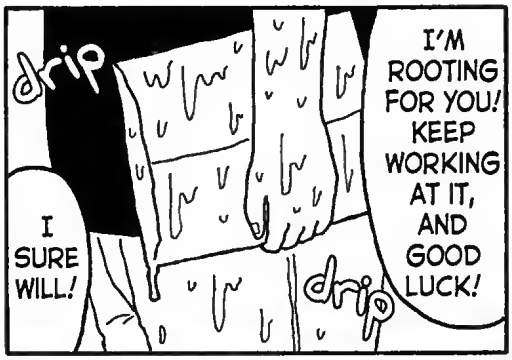

OH NO NO NO... I'M A REAL STICKLER FOR PUNCTUALITY. SHIZUO OGURO IS NEVER LATE!
A *LITTLE* RAIN? GOSH, OGURO-SAN, YOU DIDN'T NEED TO RUSH IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE AN UMBRELLA... YOU SHOULD'VE TAKEN SHELTER SOMEWHERE...

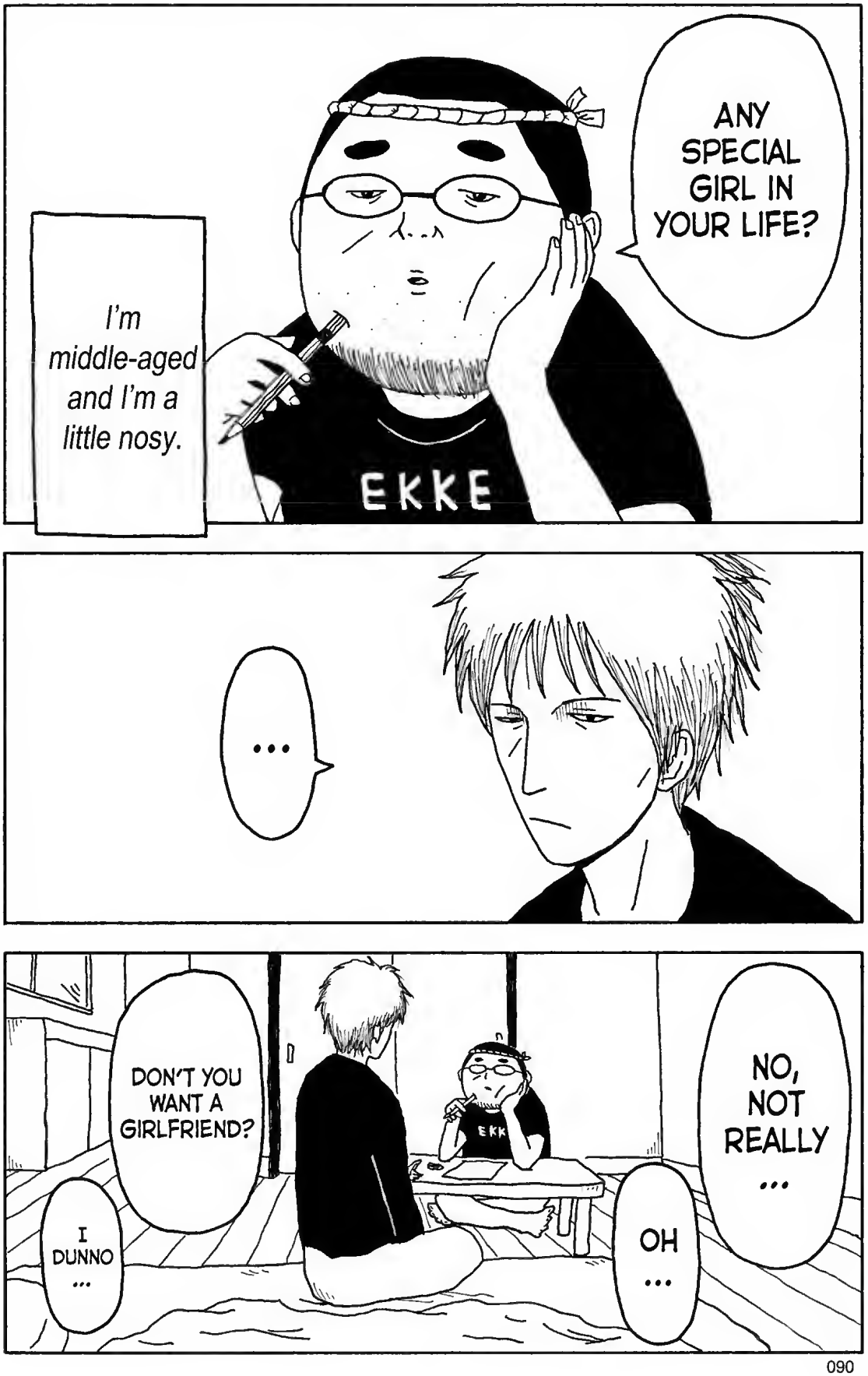
*Ekkeman is the name of the Newcomer's Award in a manga contest sponsored by EKKE magazine.

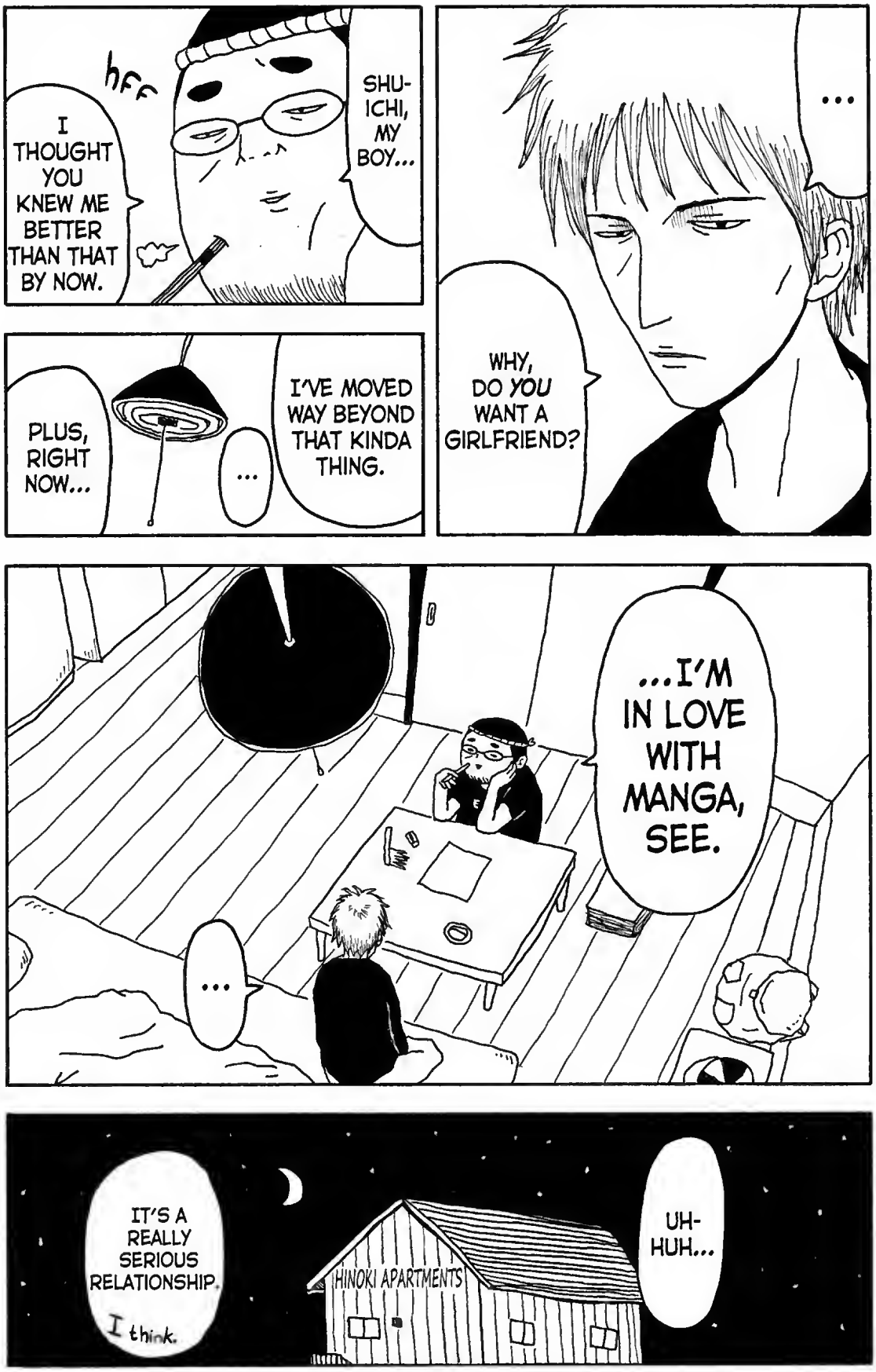
Shizuo won the "A for Effort" prize and ever since has been bringing work in to his editor, Murakami, with the hope of getting published.



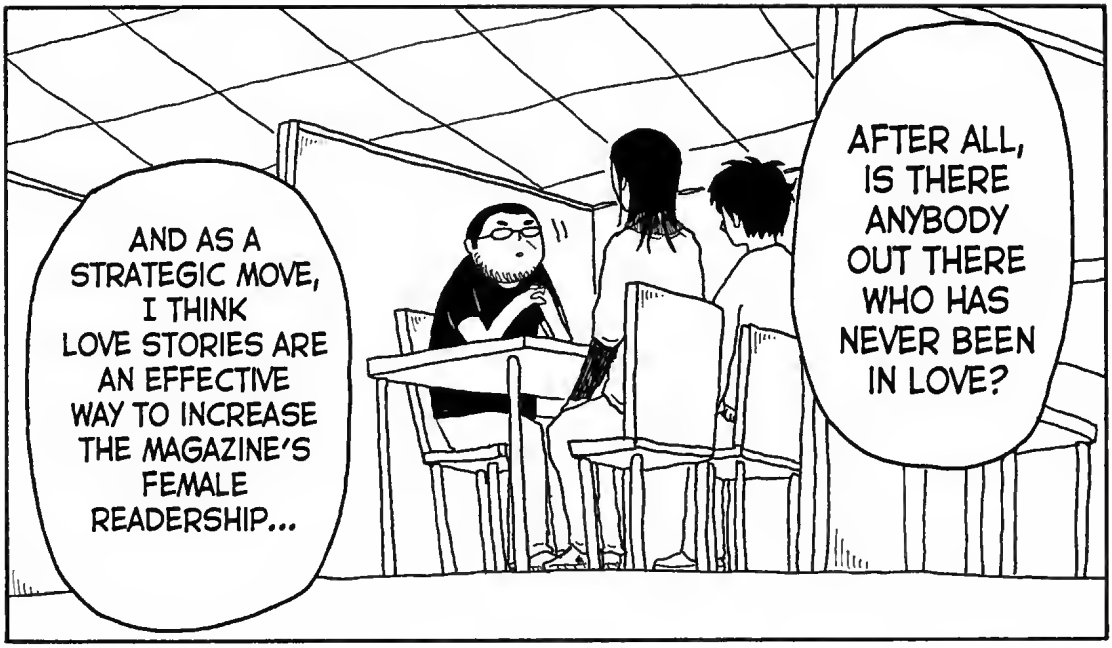


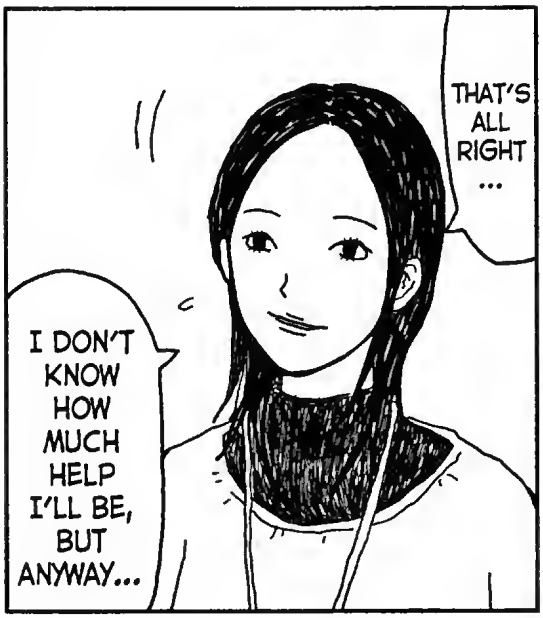


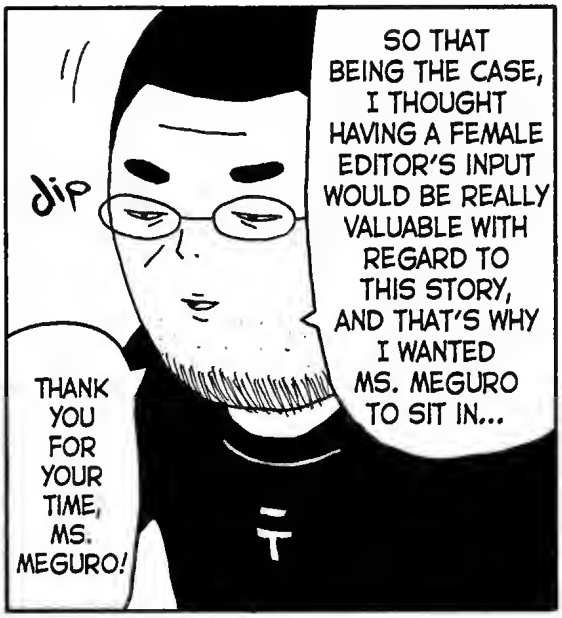

ANY SPECIAL GIRL IN YOUR LIFE?
I'm middle-aged and I'm a little nosy.
EKKE
...
NO, NOT REALLY ...
OH ...
DON'T YOU WANT A GIRLFRIEND?
I DUNNO ...

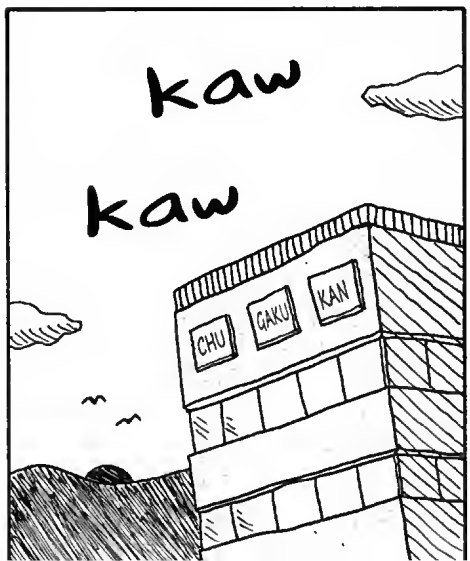

SHU-ICHI, MY BOY...
hff
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN THAT BY NOW.
...
WHY, DO *YOU* WANT A GIRLFRIEND?
I'VE MOVED WAY BEYOND THAT KINDA THING.
...
PLUS, RIGHT NOW...
...I'M IN LOVE WITH MANGA, SEE.
...
UH-HUH...
HINOKI APARTMENTS
IT'S A REALLY SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP.
I think.

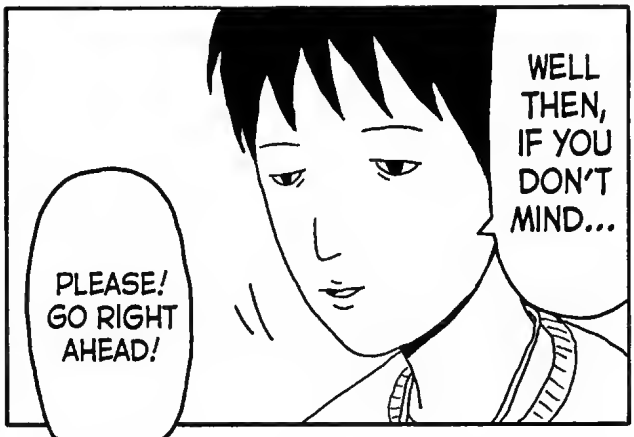
EKKE
Murakami
Chugakukan
EKKE
Meguro
Chugakukan
First Love
Shizuo Oguro
I REALLY DO.
I THINK LOVE STORIES ARE THE WAY TO GO.
First Love
Shizuo Oguro

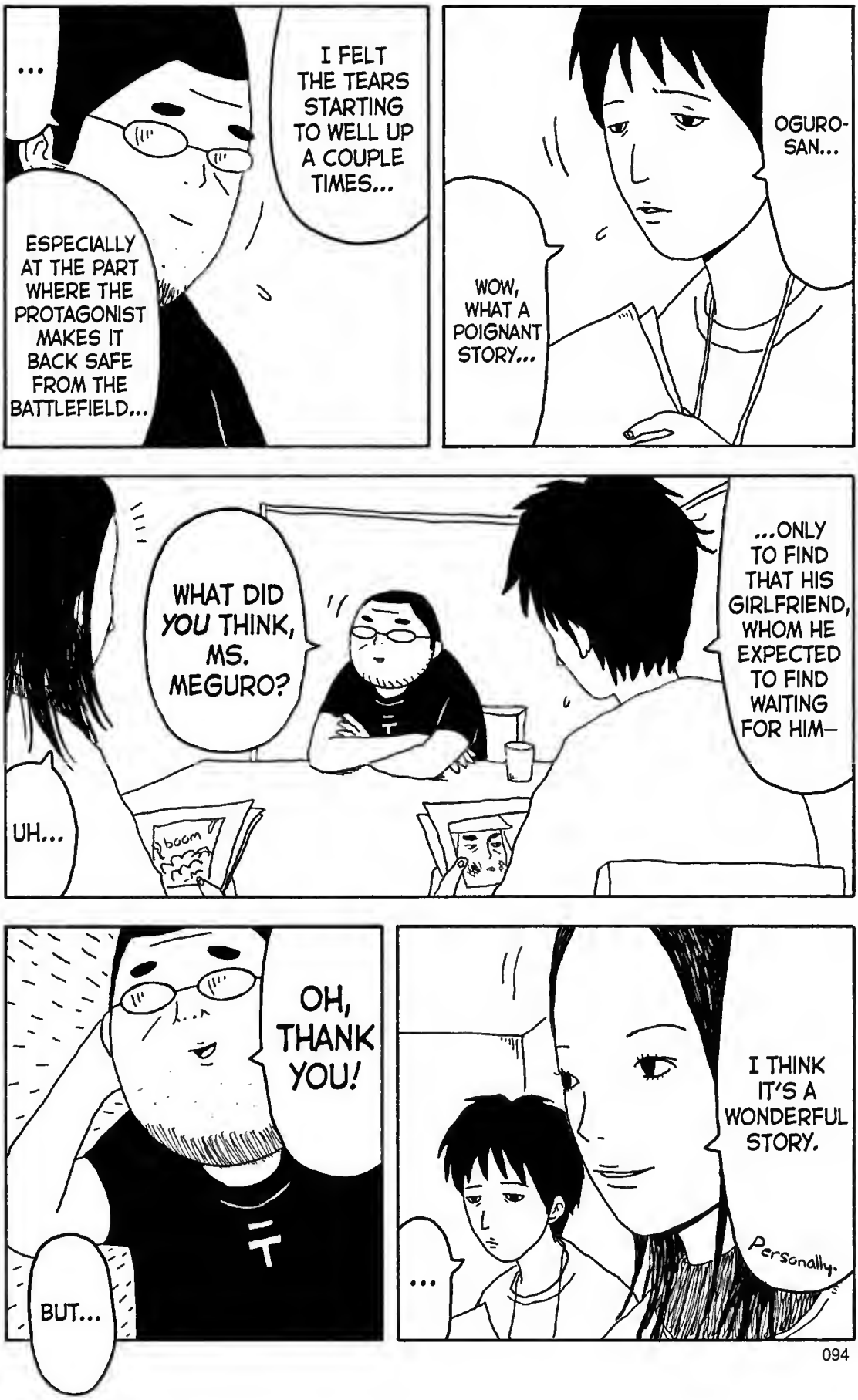

AFTER ALL, IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE WHO HAS NEVER BEEN IN LOVE?
AND AS A STRATEGIC MOVE, I THINK LOVE STORIES ARE AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO INCREASE THE MAGAZINE'S FEMALE READERSHIP...

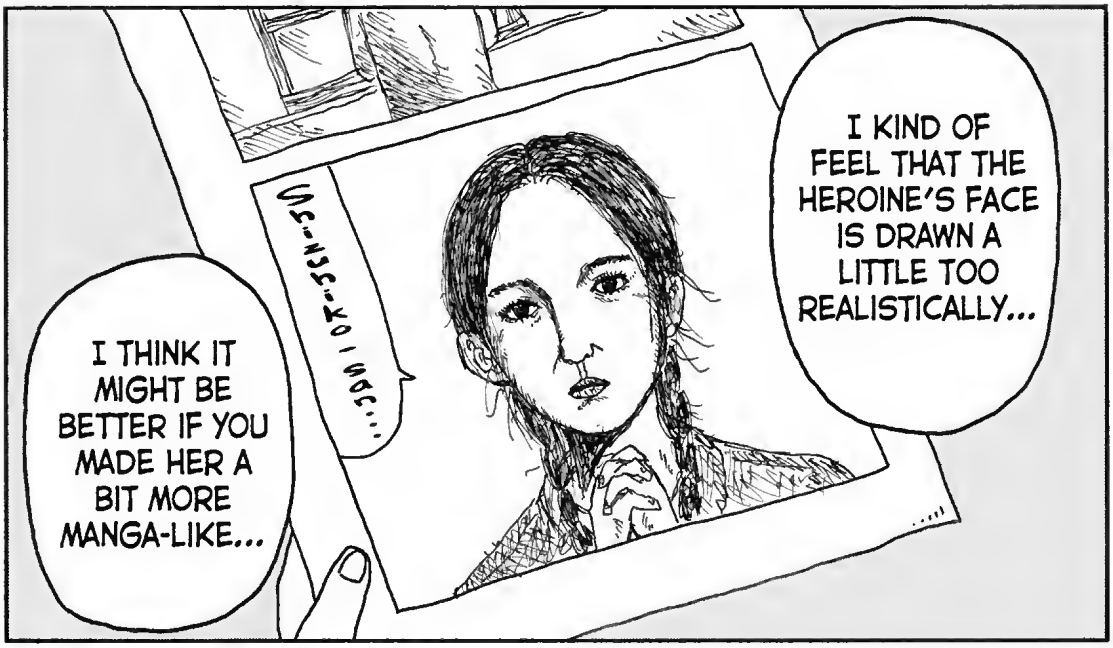

THAT'S ALL RIGHT ...
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH HELP I'LL BE, BUT ANYWAY...


SO THAT BEING THE CASE, I THOUGHT HAVING A FEMALE EDITOR'S INPUT WOULD BE REALLY VALUABLE WITH REGARD TO THIS STORY, AND THAT'S WHY I WANTED MS. MEGURO TO SIT IN...
dip
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, MS. MEGURO!

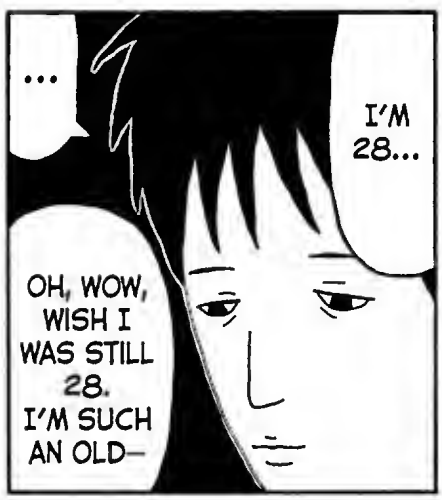

kaw
kaw
CHU
GAKU
KAN

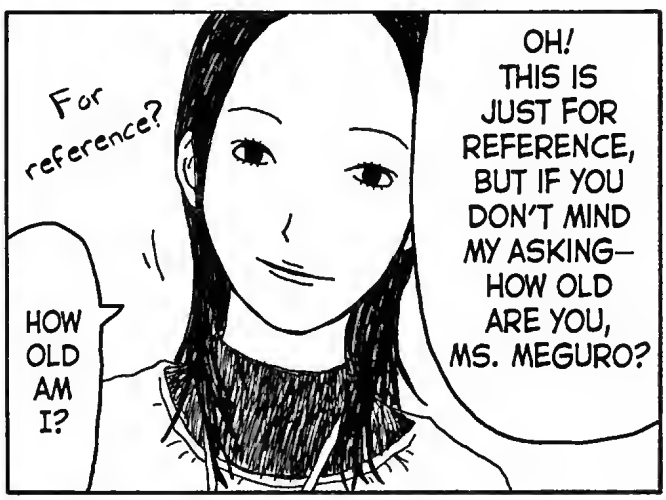

WELL THEN, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
PLEASE! GO RIGHT AHEAD!

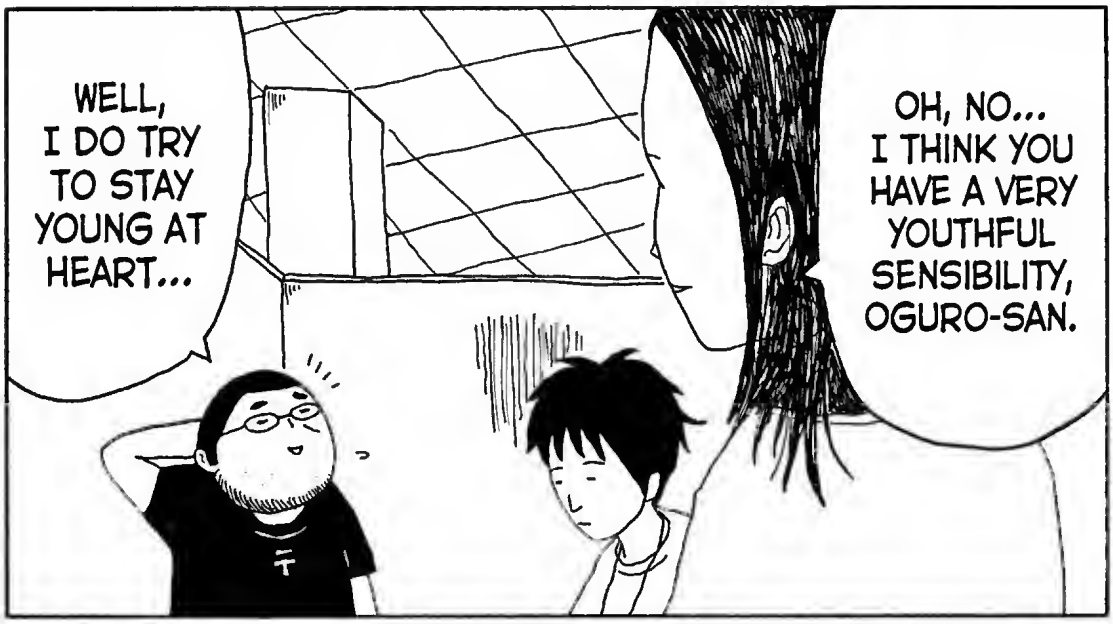

...
I FELT THE TEARS STARTING TO WELL UP A COUPLE TIMES...
ESPECIALLY AT THE PART WHERE THE PROTAGONIST MAKES IT BACK SAFE FROM THE BATTLEFIELD...
OGURO-SAN...
WOW, WHAT A POIGNANT STORY...
WHAT DID YOU THINK, MS. MEGURO?
...ONLY TO FIND THAT HIS GIRLFRIEND, WHOM HE EXPECTED TO FIND WAITING FOR HIM—
UH...
boom
OH, THANK YOU!
BUT...
I THINK IT'S A WONDERFUL STORY.
Personally,
...


I KIND OF FEEL THAT THE HEROINE'S FACE IS DRAWN A LITTLE TOO REALISTICALLY...
I THINK IT MIGHT BE BETTER IF YOU MADE HER A BIT MORE MANGA-LIKE...

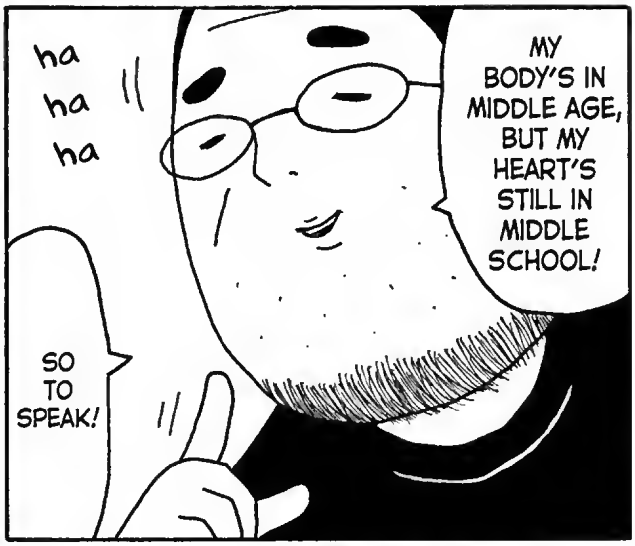
AH, I SEE! THAT IS OF COURSE ONE WAY OF DOING IT...
tump
I'M REALLY GLAD I ASKED YOU TO SIT IN ON THIS, MS. MEGURO.
OH, NO ...

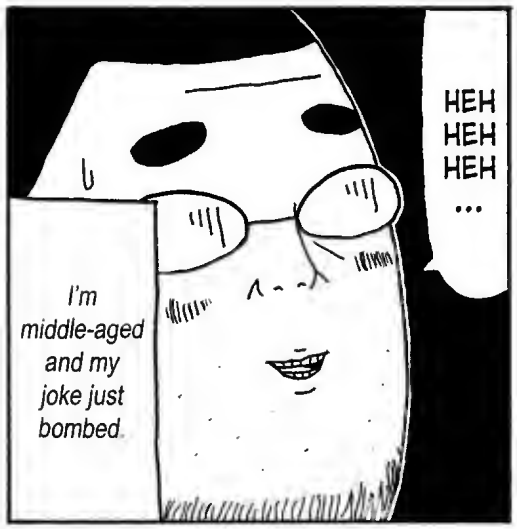

I'M 28...
...
OH, WOW, WISH I WAS STILL 28. I'M SUCH AN OLD—

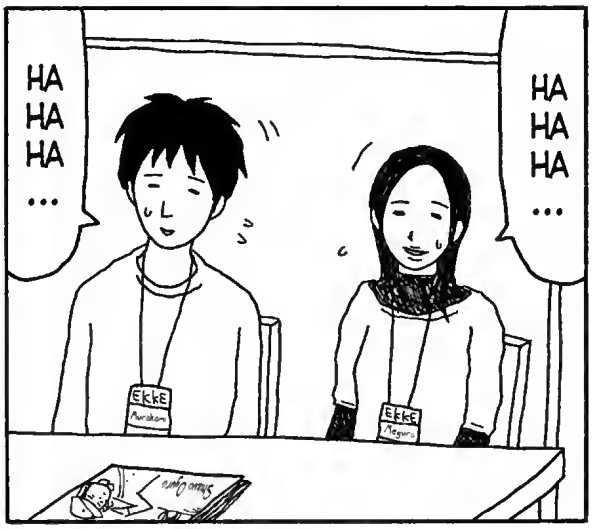

OH! THIS IS JUST FOR REFERENCE, BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND MY ASKING— HOW OLD ARE YOU, MS. MEGURO?
For reference?
HOW OLD AM I?


WELL, I DO TRY TO STAY YOUNG AT HEART...
OH, NO... I THINK YOU HAVE A VERY YOUTHFUL SENSIBILITY, OGURO-SAN.

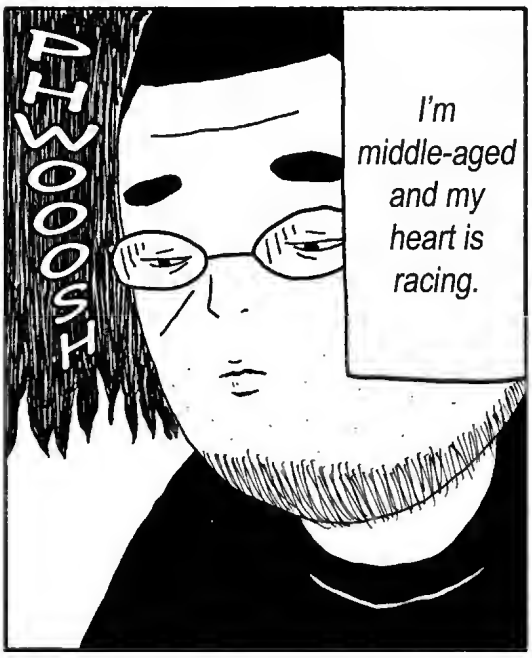
...


ha ha ha
MY BODY'S IN MIDDLE AGE, BUT MY HEART'S STILL IN MIDDLE SCHOOL!
SO TO SPEAK!


HEH HEH HEH ...
I'm middle-aged and my joke just bombed.


HA HA HA ...
HA HA HA ...

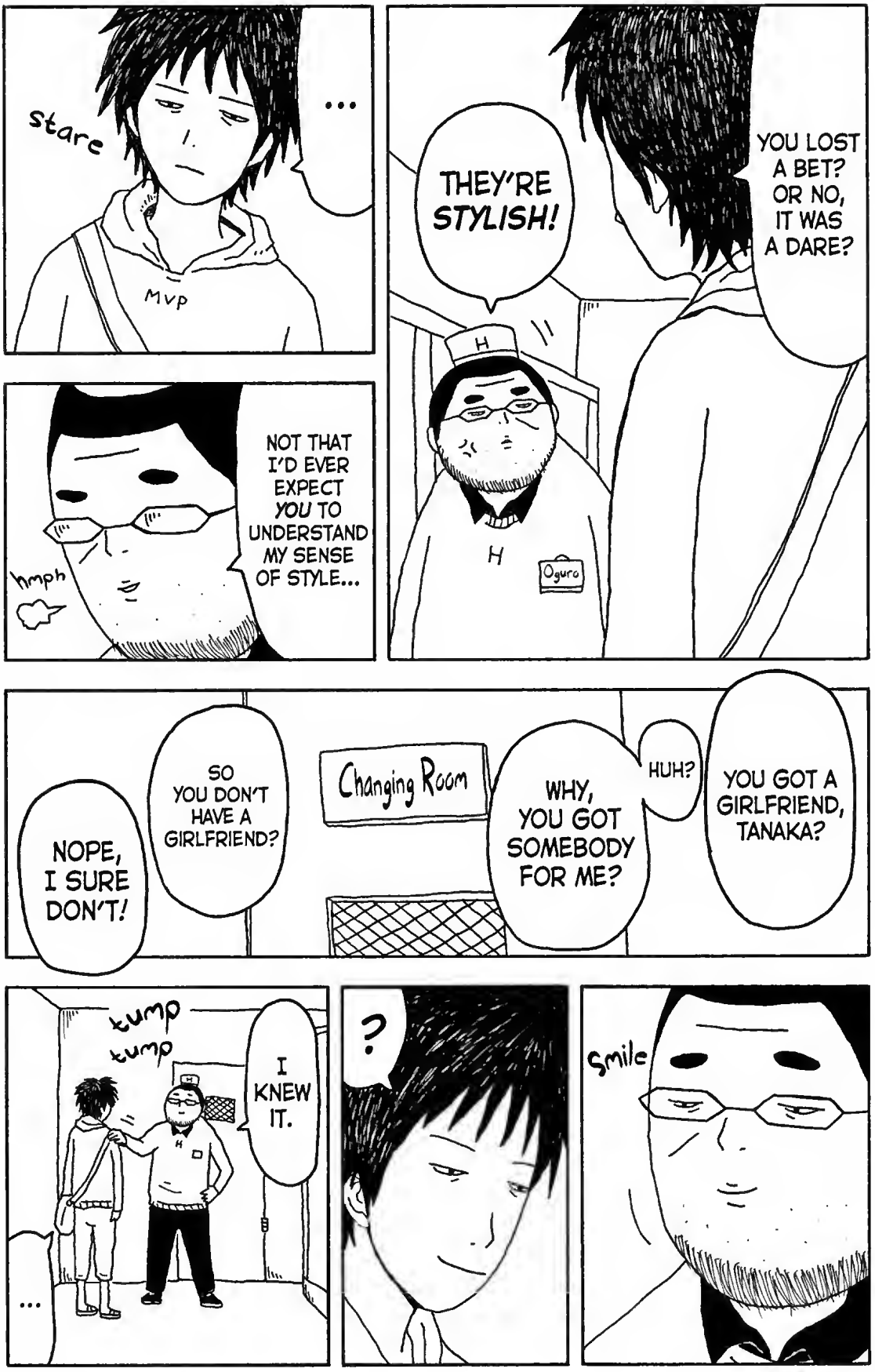
EKKE Editorial Staff
Mayumi Meguro
CHUGAKUKAN

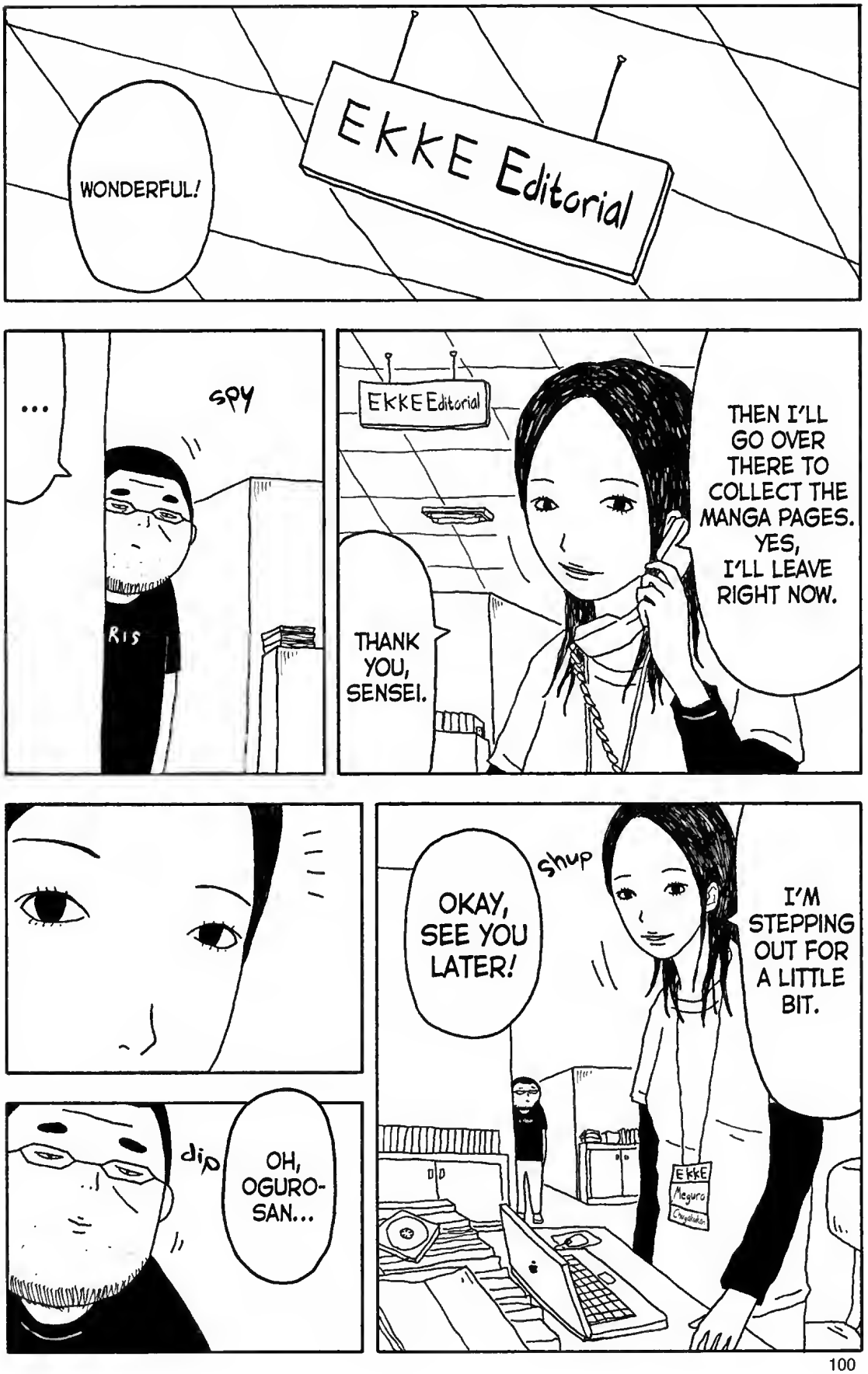

PHWOOOSH
I'm middle-aged and my heart is racing.

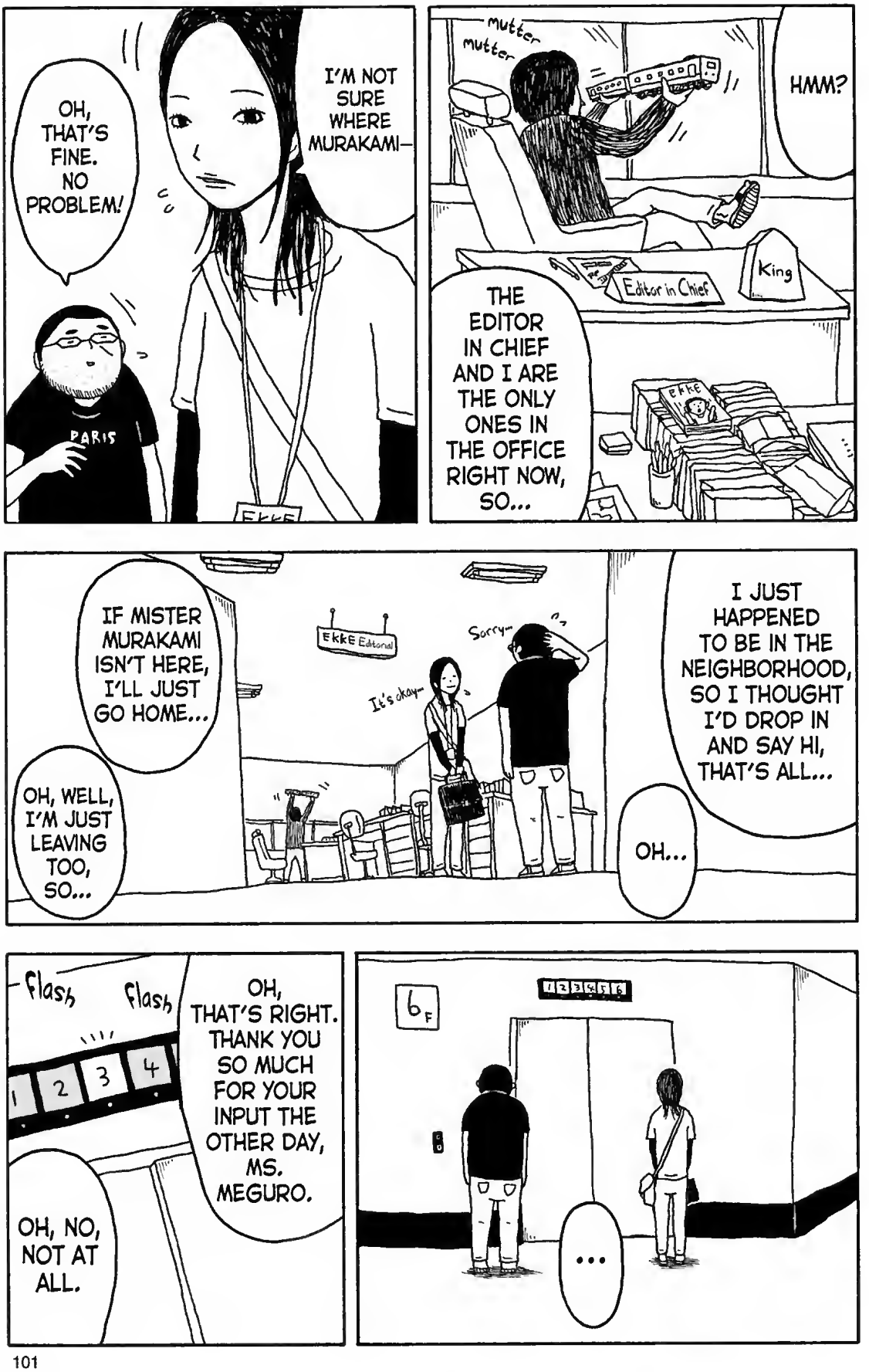
MAYBE I'LL TRY OUT CONTACT LENSES...
And my mind is working.

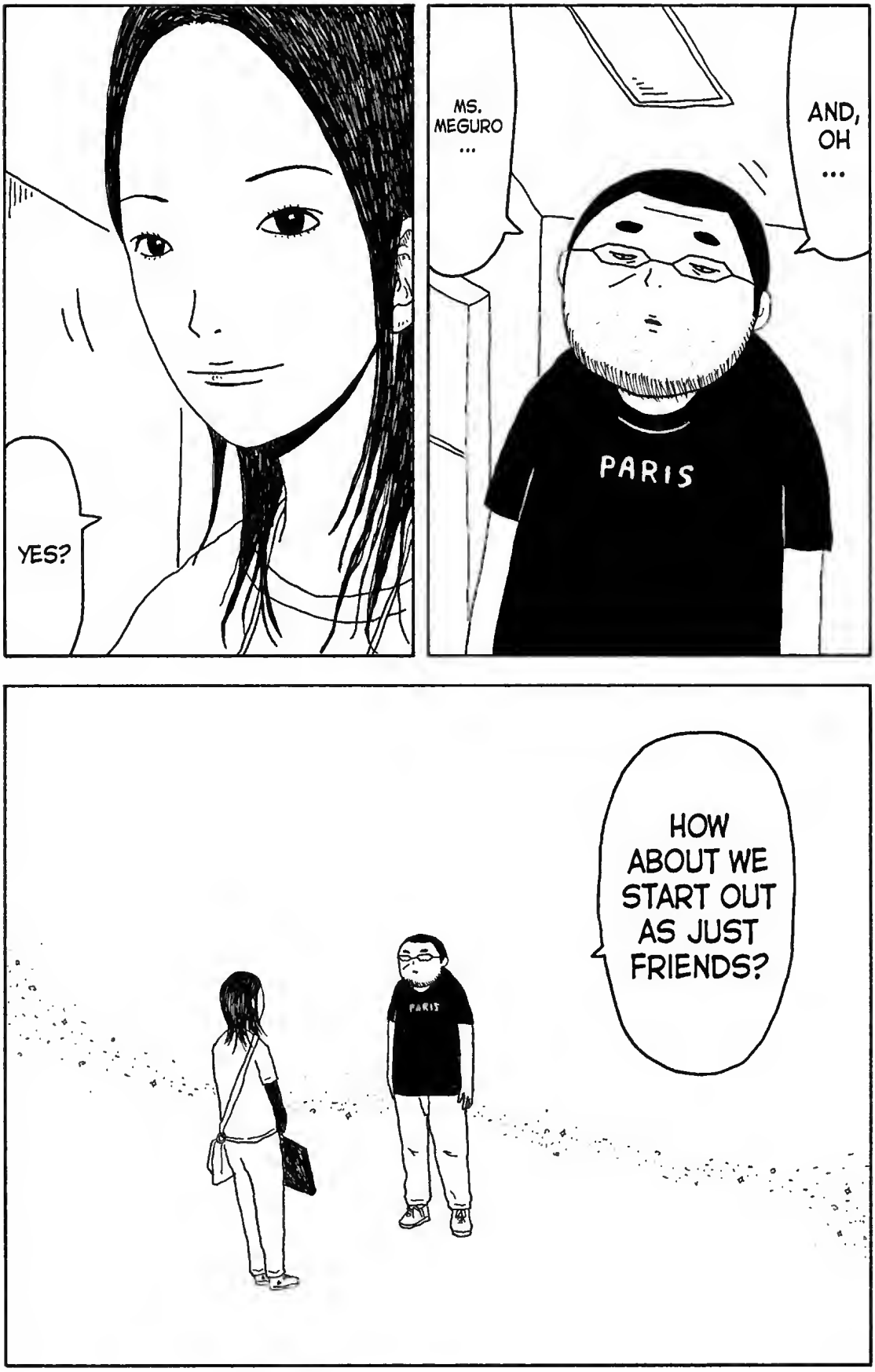
I'm your fan.
(I love you.)

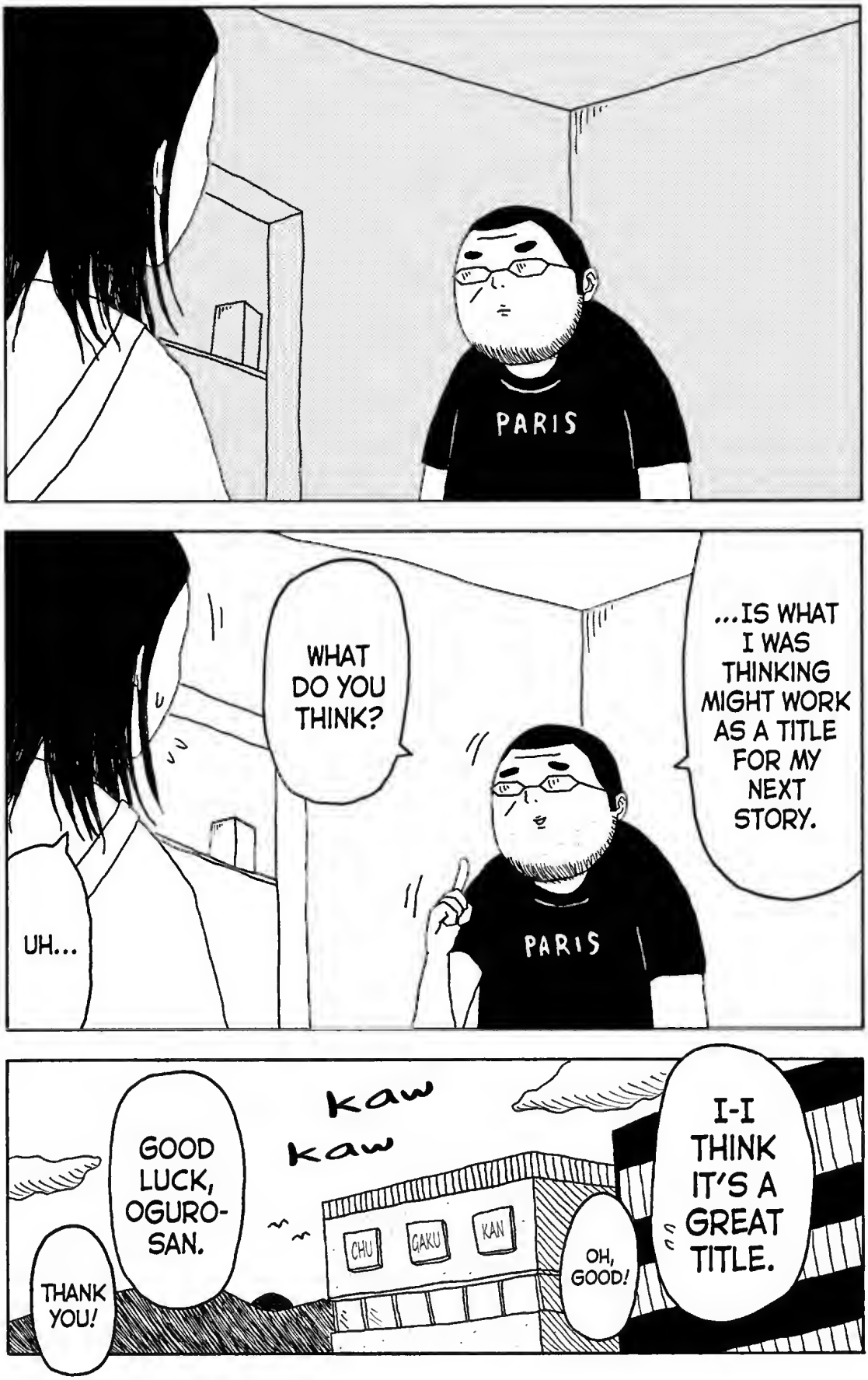
KA-CHAK
OH, HEY, MANAGER* (*NICKNAME). GOOD MORNING!
MVP
H Burgers
Now Hiring
Be nice...
COME ON, MANAGER. DON'T BE LIKE THAT...
WAIT A MINUTE, TANAKA? I THOUGHT YOU QUIT WORKING HERE.
BUT HEY, WHAT THE HECK?!
...
WHAT'S UP WITH THOSE TRICKY GLASSES?


stare
...
MVP
THEY'RE STYLISH!
YOU LOST A BET? OR NO, IT WAS A DARE?
H
H
Oguro
hmph
NOT THAT I'D EVER EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND MY SENSE OF STYLE...
NOPE, I SURE DON'T!
SO YOU DON'T HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?
Changing Room
WHY, YOU GOT SOMEBODY FOR ME?
HUH?
YOU GOT A GIRLFRIEND, TANAKA?
tump tump
I KNEW IT.
...
?
smile

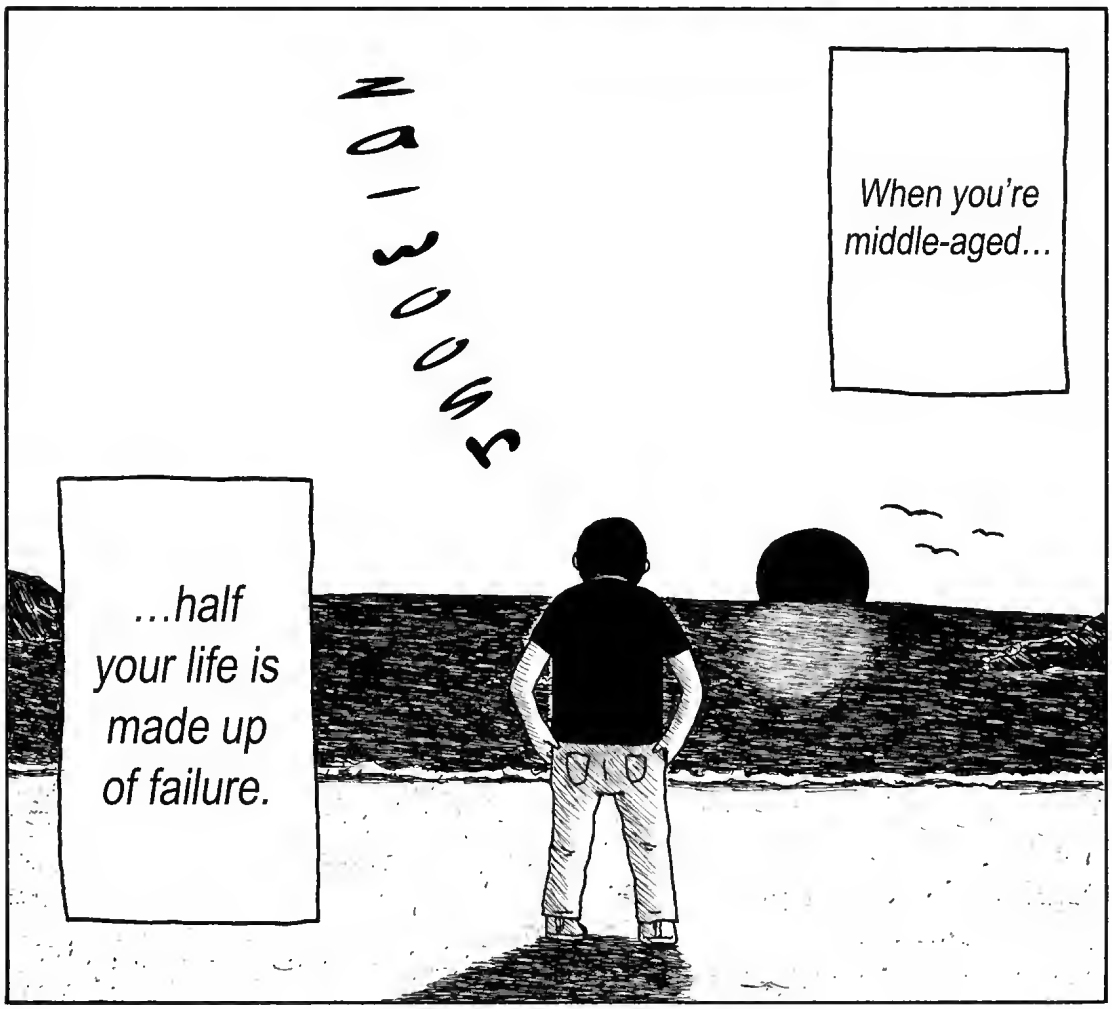

WONDERFUL!
EKKE Editorial
...
SPY
RIS
EKKE Editorial
THANK YOU, SENSEI.
THEN I'LL GO OVER THERE TO COLLECT THE MANGA PAGES. YES, I'LL LEAVE RIGHT NOW.
dip
OH, OGURO-SAN...
shup
OKAY, SEE YOU LATER!
I'M STEPPING OUT FOR A LITTLE BIT.
EKKE
Meguro
Cuyahoga

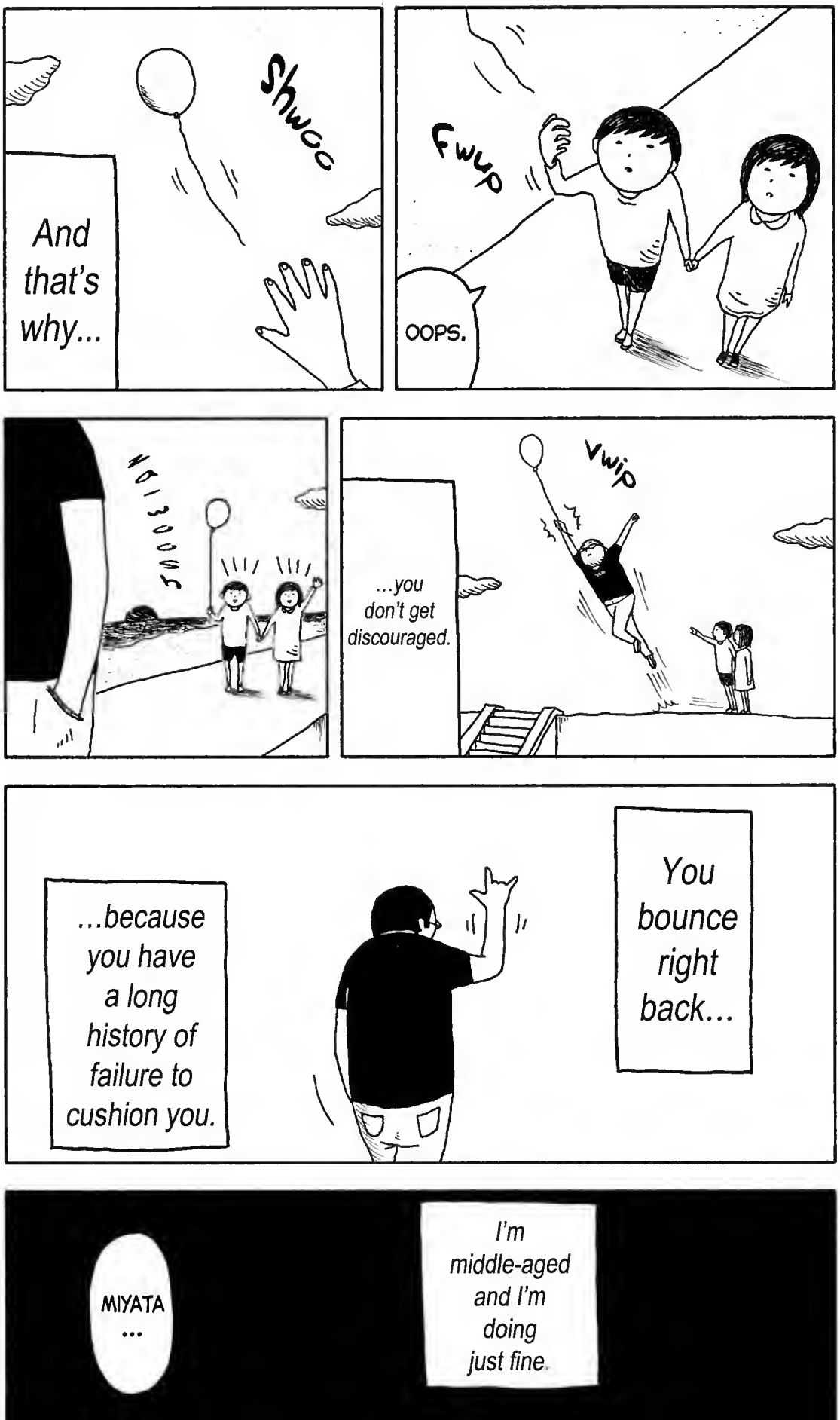

I'M NOT SURE WHERE MURAKAMI—
OH, THAT'S FINE. NO PROBLEM!
PARIS
EKKE
mutter mutter
HMM?
Editor in Chief
King
THE EDITOR IN CHIEF AND I ARE THE ONLY ONES IN THE OFFICE RIGHT NOW, SO...
IF MISTER MURAKAMI ISN'T HERE, I'LL JUST GO HOME...
OH, WELL, I'M JUST LEAVING TOO, SO...
EKKE Editorial
It's okay~
Sorry~
I JUST HAPPENED TO BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, SO I THOUGHT I'D DROP IN AND SAY HI, THAT'S ALL...
OH...
Flash Flash
1 2 3 4
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR INPUT THE OTHER DAY, MS. MEGURO.
OH, NO, NOT AT ALL.
6F
1 2 3 4 5 6
...


YES?
MS. MEGURO ...
AND, OH ...
PARIS
HOW ABOUT WE START OUT AS JUST FRIENDS?
PARIS


PARIS
...IS WHAT I WAS THINKING MIGHT WORK AS A TITLE FOR MY NEXT STORY.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
UH...
PARIS
I-I THINK IT'S A GREAT TITLE.
OH, GOOD!
kaw
kaw
CHU
GAKU
KAN
GOOD LUCK, OGURO-SAN.
THANK YOU!

Jaewoo

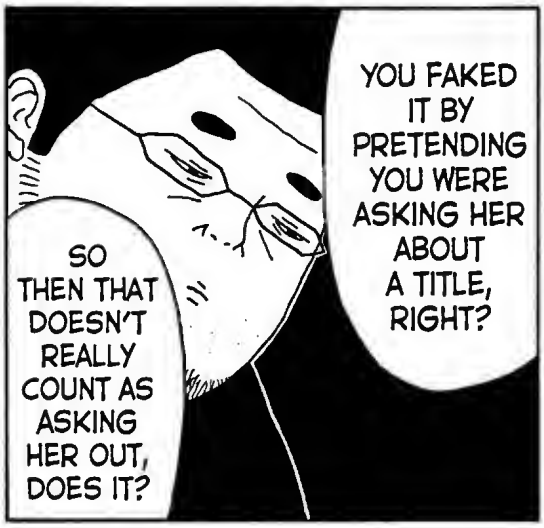

Jaewoo
When you're middle-aged...
...half your life is made up of failure.


And that's why...
Shwoo
FWUP
OOPS.
...you don't get discouraged.
VWIP
...because you have a long history of failure to cushion you.
You bounce right back...
MIYATA ...
I'm middle-aged and I'm doing just fine.

KILL ME. I'M BEGGING YOU.
Happy
Sake Sa

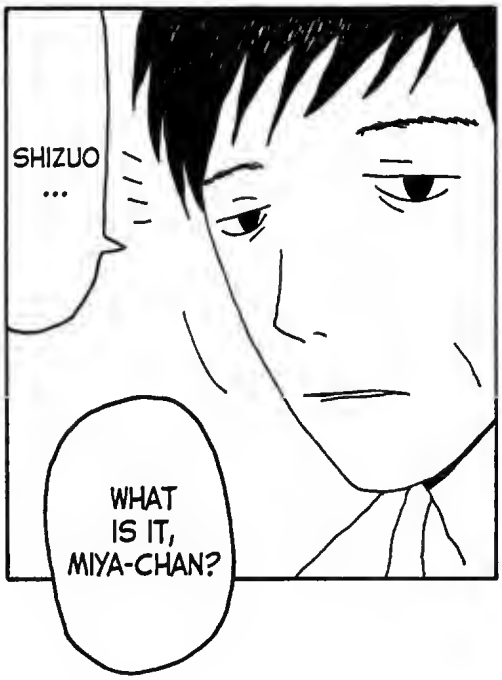
IT'S NOT LIKE SHE ACTUALLY TURNED YOU DOWN OR ANYTHING, RIGHT?
What're you talking about?
SHIZUO... DON'T GET SO DOWN OVER IT...

?
FORTY-TWO YEARS ...
Beer
PARIS

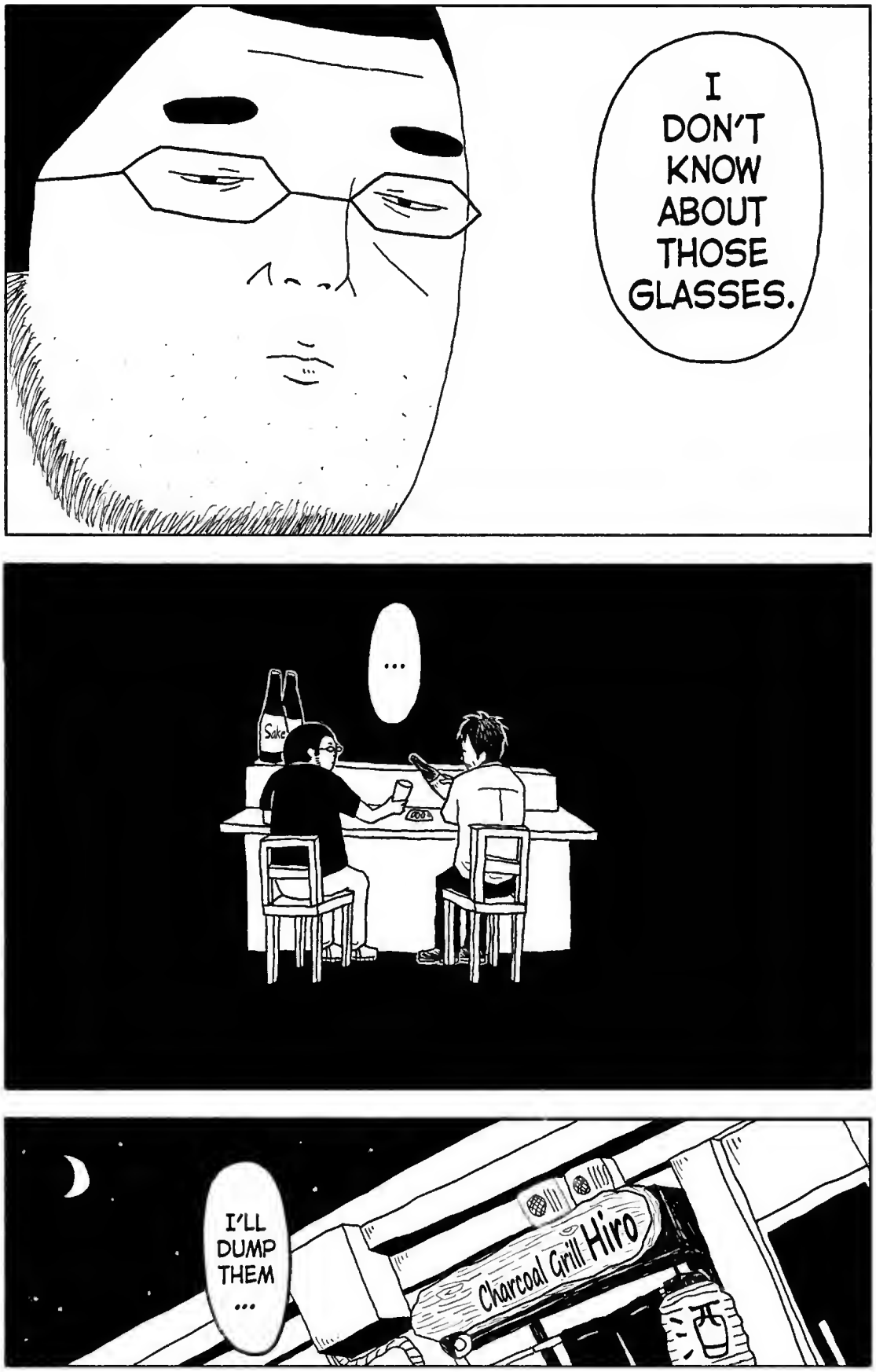

YOU FAKED IT BY PRETENDING YOU WERE ASKING HER ABOUT A TITLE, RIGHT?
SO THEN THAT DOESN'T REALLY COUNT AS ASKING HER OUT, DOES IT?

FORTY-TWO YEARS I'VE LIVED ON THIS PLANET AND NEVER IN ALL THAT TIME...
...DID I SEE ANYONE LOOK AS STRICKEN AS SHE DID THEN...
PARIS

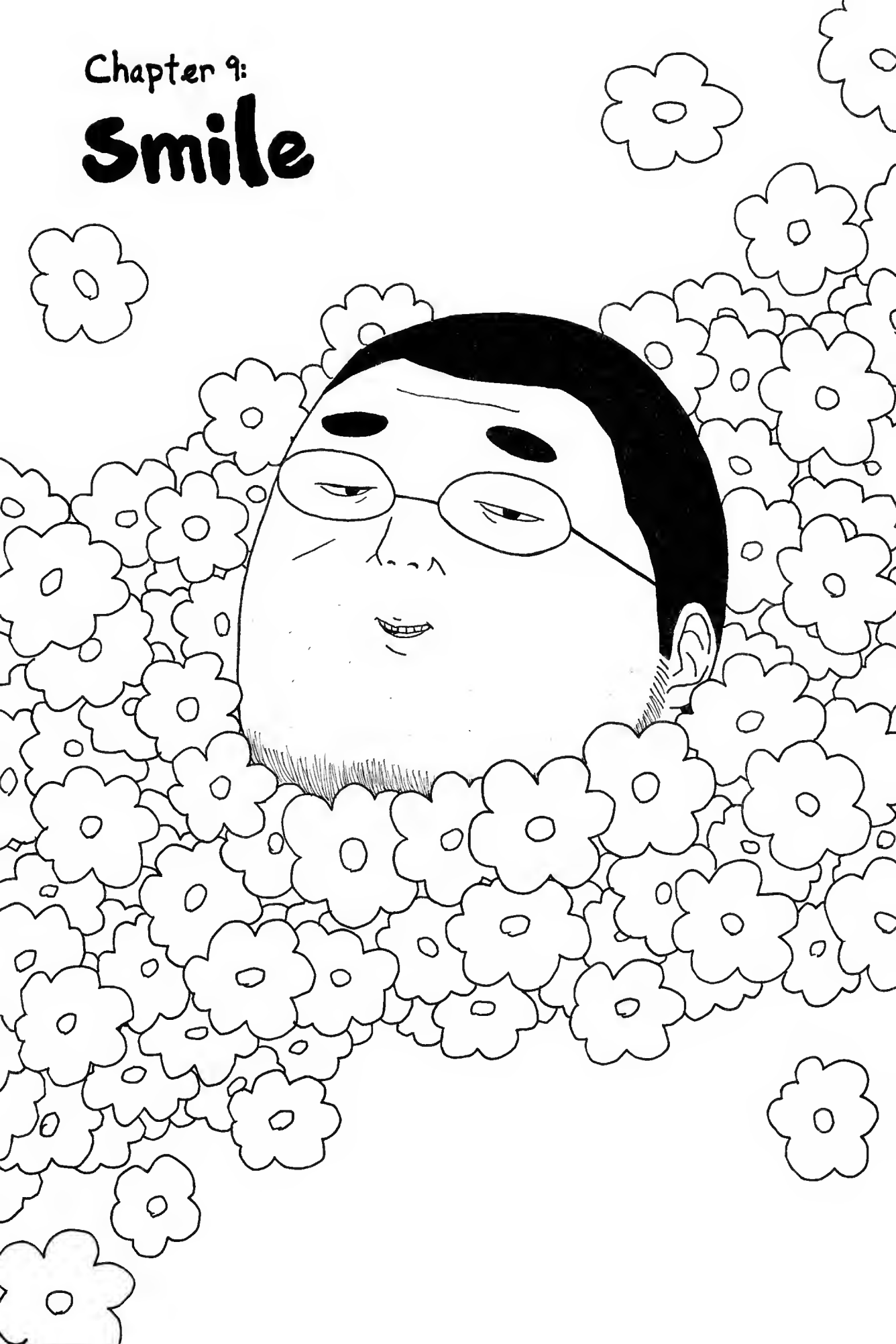
AW, COME ON... THAT JUST GOES TO SHOW THERE'S STILL LOTS OF THINGS IN THIS WORLD THAT WE'VE NEVER SEEN, SHIZUO...
COME ON, HAVE ANOTHER DRINK.
MIYATA ...
Sake
Beer

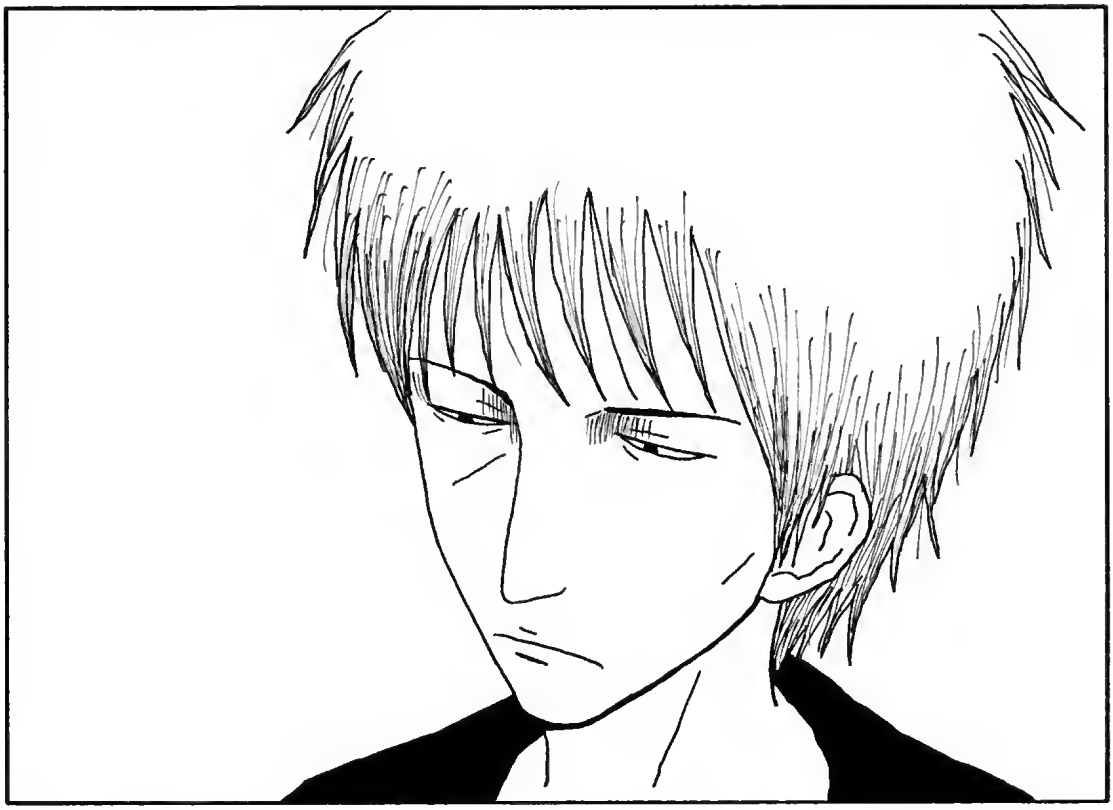

SHIZUO ...
WHAT IS IT, MIYA-CHAN?

...
WHO KNEW WHAT A GREAT GUY YOU WERE?
You're making me cry.
Happy
Sake
Sake
Beer


I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THOSE GLASSES.
...
Sake
I'LL DUMP THEM ...
Charcoal Grill Hiro

Chapter 9:
Smile





YES
...

...
phlap
Osamu
Dazai ...

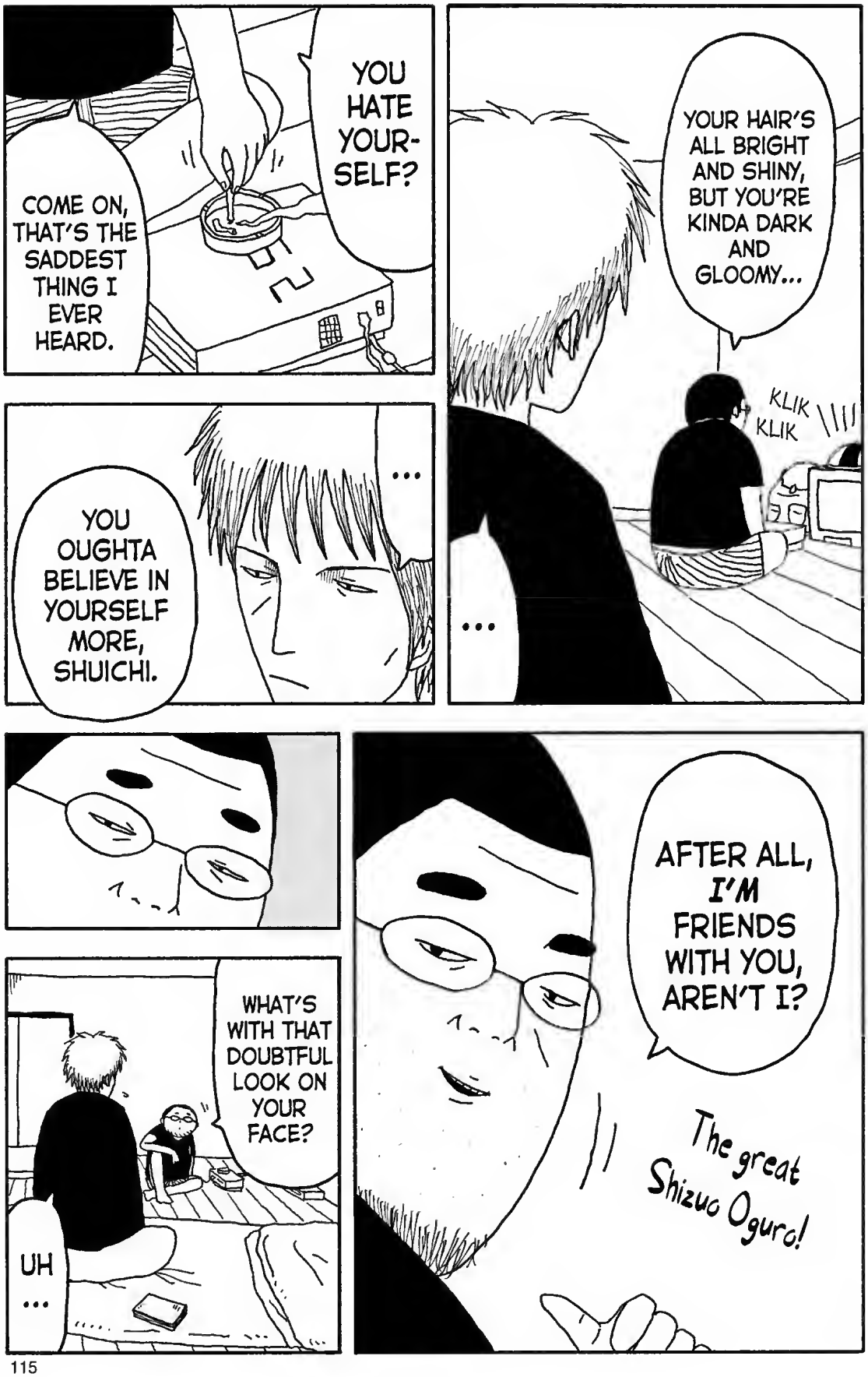
...
YES
...
OH
YES
...

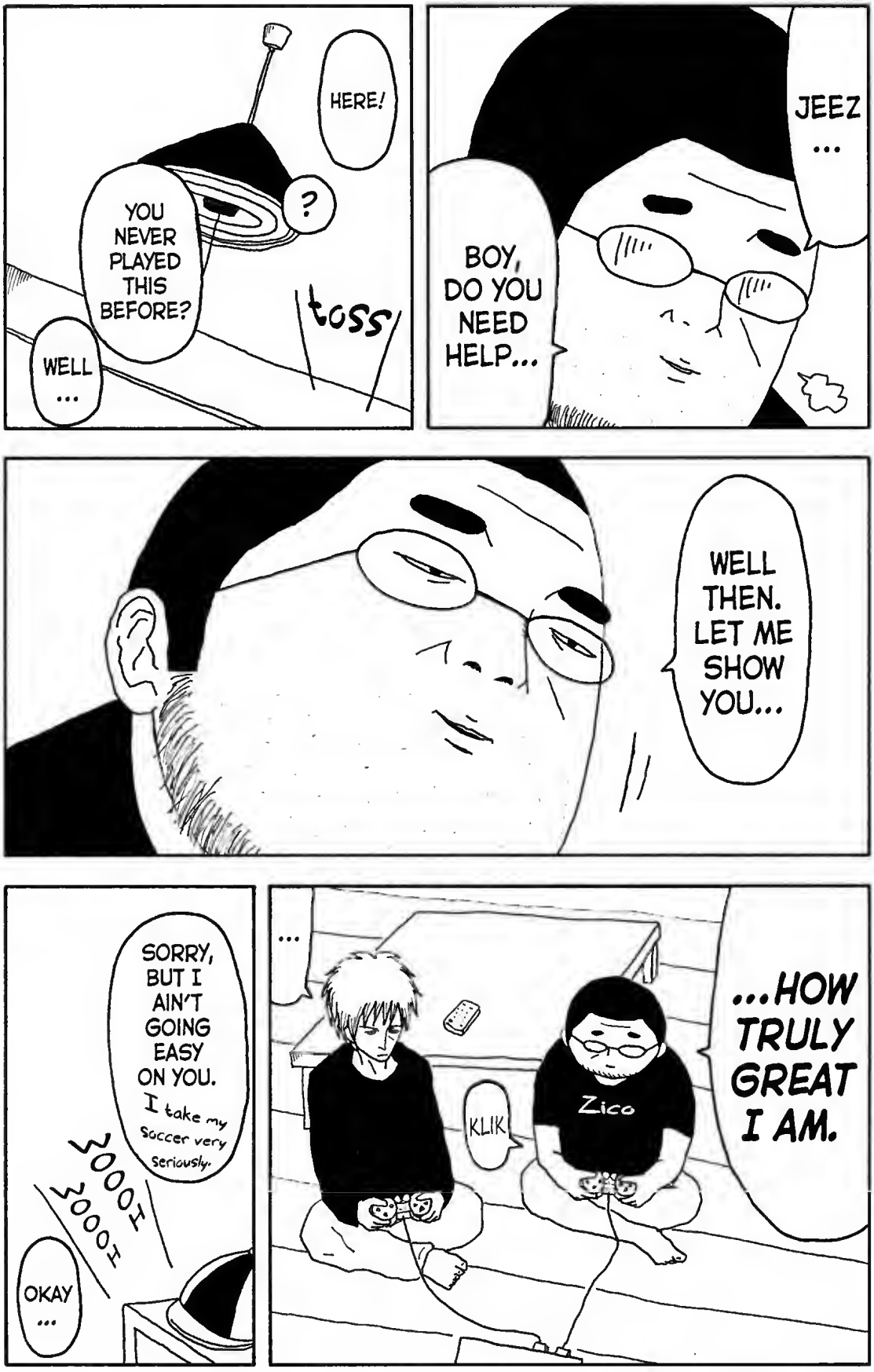
...
GOOOOOal!
YESSS!
Zico
A resounding victory for Oguro FC.
5-0
FWEE FWEE
And there's the final whistle. The game is over.
...
I AM AMAZING. I AMAZE MYSELF ...
mutter mutter
MY GOD.

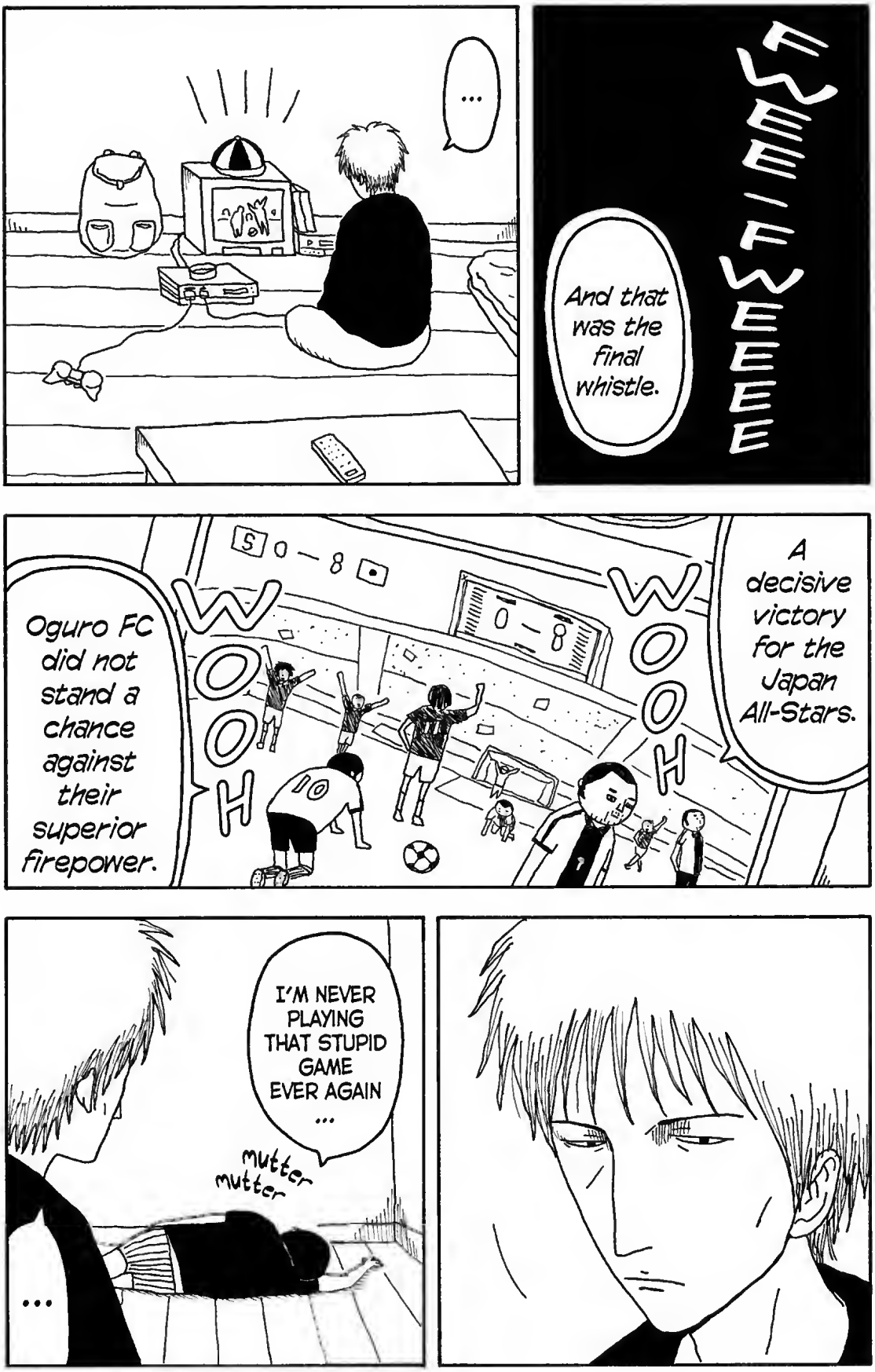
C'mon!
FWEE-FWEE
And there's the whistle— it's kick-off time!
mwup
HERE ...
Zico
LET ME AMAZE US ALL ONCE AGAIN...
SHIZUO-SAN...
HM?
DO YOU LIKE YOURSELF?
phrrrt

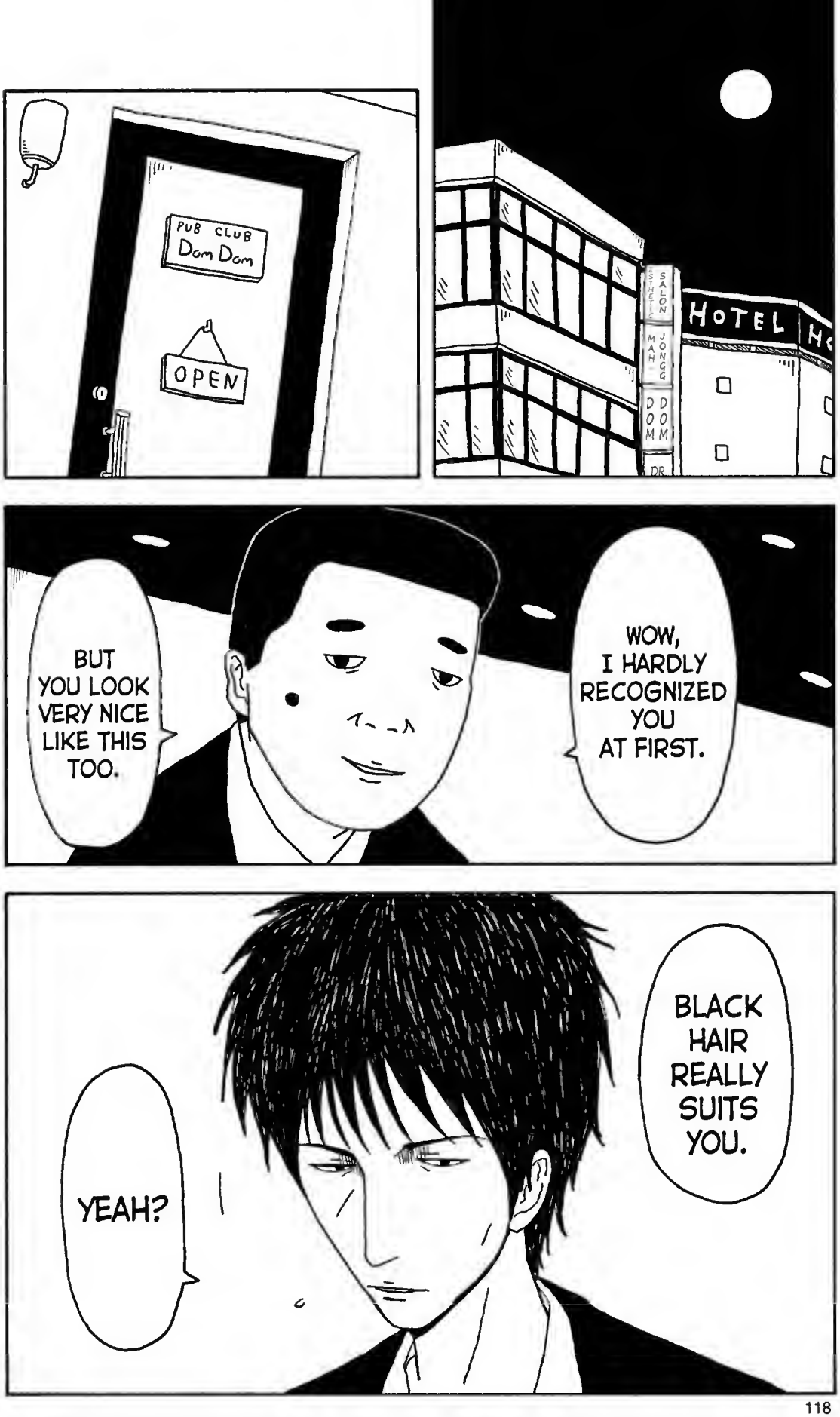
GOOOOOal!
DO I LIKE MYSELF, HMM...
And Oguro kicks the ball!
...
WOOH
WOOH
10
Oguro FC has already taken the lead...
SAME AS MOST PEOPLE, I GUESS.
What about you?
YOU, SHU-ICHI?
Zico
KLIK KLIK
...with that magnificent goal from their forward, Oguro.
...

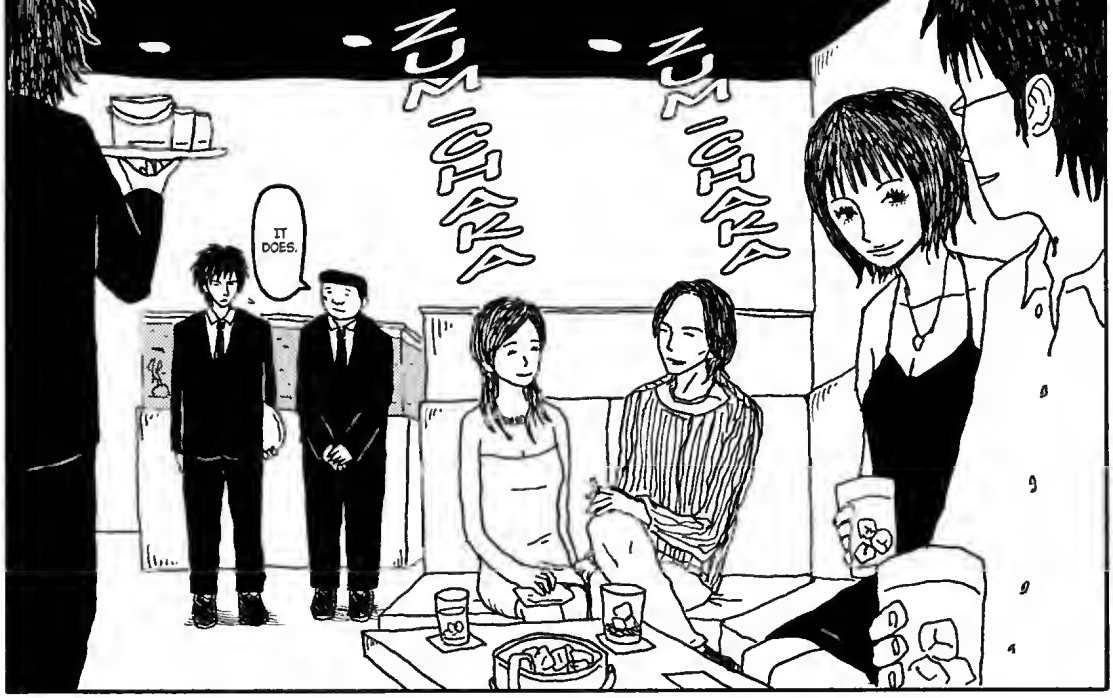
NUH-UH. NOT REALLY...
WHAT, YOU MEAN YOU HATE YOURSELF?
YEAH, I GUESS ...
HUH ...
YOU KNOW, SHU-ICHI...
YOU'RE REALLY NEGATIVE, AREN'T YOU?


YOU HATE YOURSELF?
COME ON, THAT'S THE SADDEST THING I EVER HEARD.
YOUR HAIR'S ALL BRIGHT AND SHINY, BUT YOU'RE KINDA DARK AND GLOOMY...
KLIK KLIK
...
...
YOU OUGHTA BELIEVE IN YOURSELF MORE, SHUICHI.
AFTER ALL, I'M FRIENDS WITH YOU, AREN'T I?
The great Shizuo Oguro!
WHAT'S WITH THAT DOUBTFUL LOOK ON YOUR FACE?
UH ...


HERE!
?
YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS BEFORE?
WELL ...
toss
JEEZ ...
BOY, DO YOU NEED HELP...
WELL THEN. LET ME SHOW YOU...
SORRY, BUT I AIN'T GOING EASY ON YOU.
I take my soccer very seriously.
OKAY ...
...
KLIK
Zico
...HOW TRULY GREAT I AM.

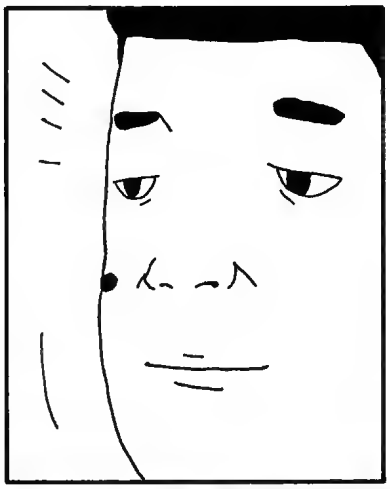

...
FWEE! FWEEEE
And that was the final whistle.
Oguro FC did not stand a chance against their superior firepower.
WOOH
WOOH
0-8
A decisive victory for the Japan All-Stars.
I'M NEVER PLAYING THAT STUPID GAME EVER AGAIN ...
mutter mutter
...


PUB CLUB
Dom Dom
OPEN
HOTEL
SALON
ESTHETIC
MAH JONGG
DOM DOM
DR
WOW, I HARDLY RECOGNIZED YOU AT FIRST.
BUT YOU LOOK VERY NICE LIKE THIS TOO.
BLACK HAIR REALLY SUITS YOU.
YEAH?


ZUM-CHAKA
ZUM-CHAKA
IT DOES.

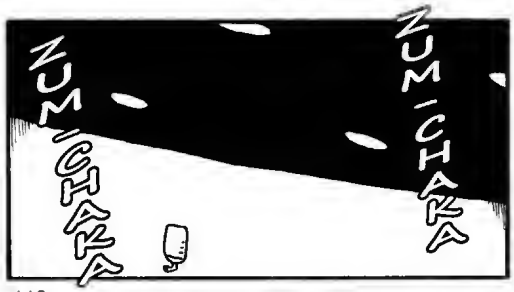
UH, D'YOU MIND IF I GO CLEAN UP?
HUH?

THE CUSTOMER AT TABLE NO. 3 SEEMS TO BE LEAVING.
I'LL GO CLEAN UP THE TABLE.
Thanks.
Come again!

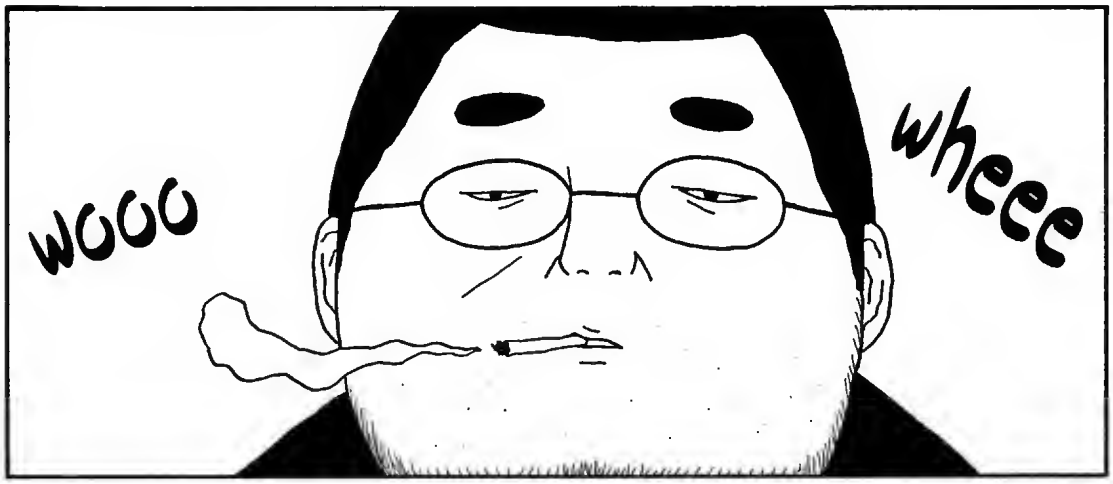


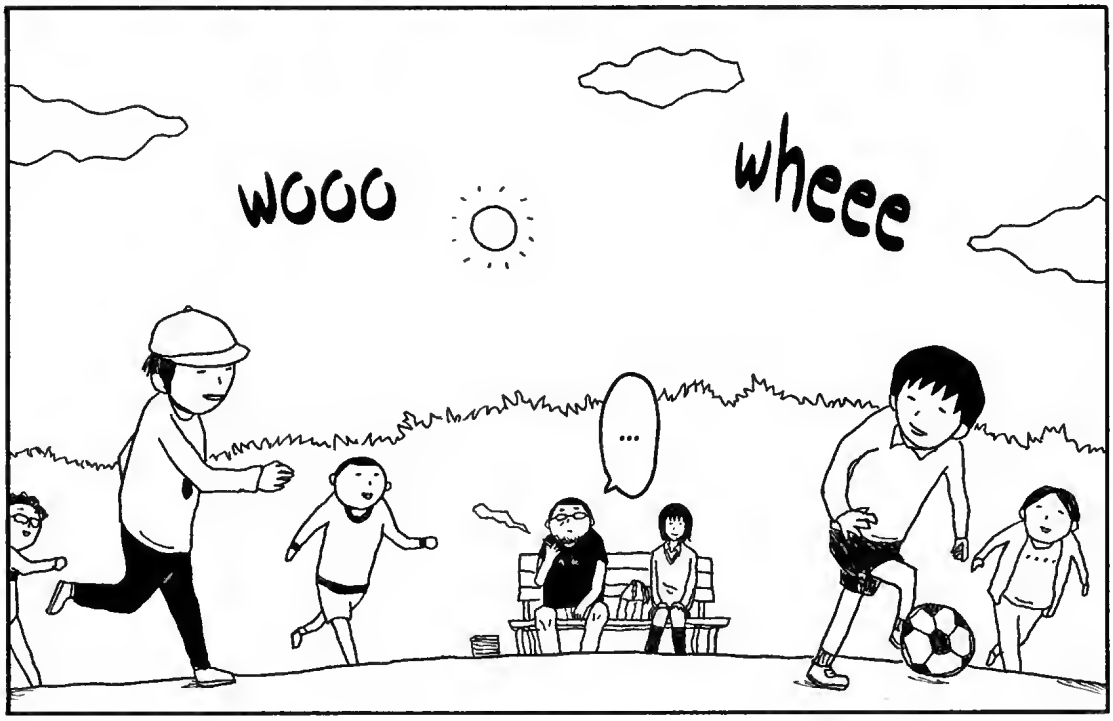
...
SURE.
Smile

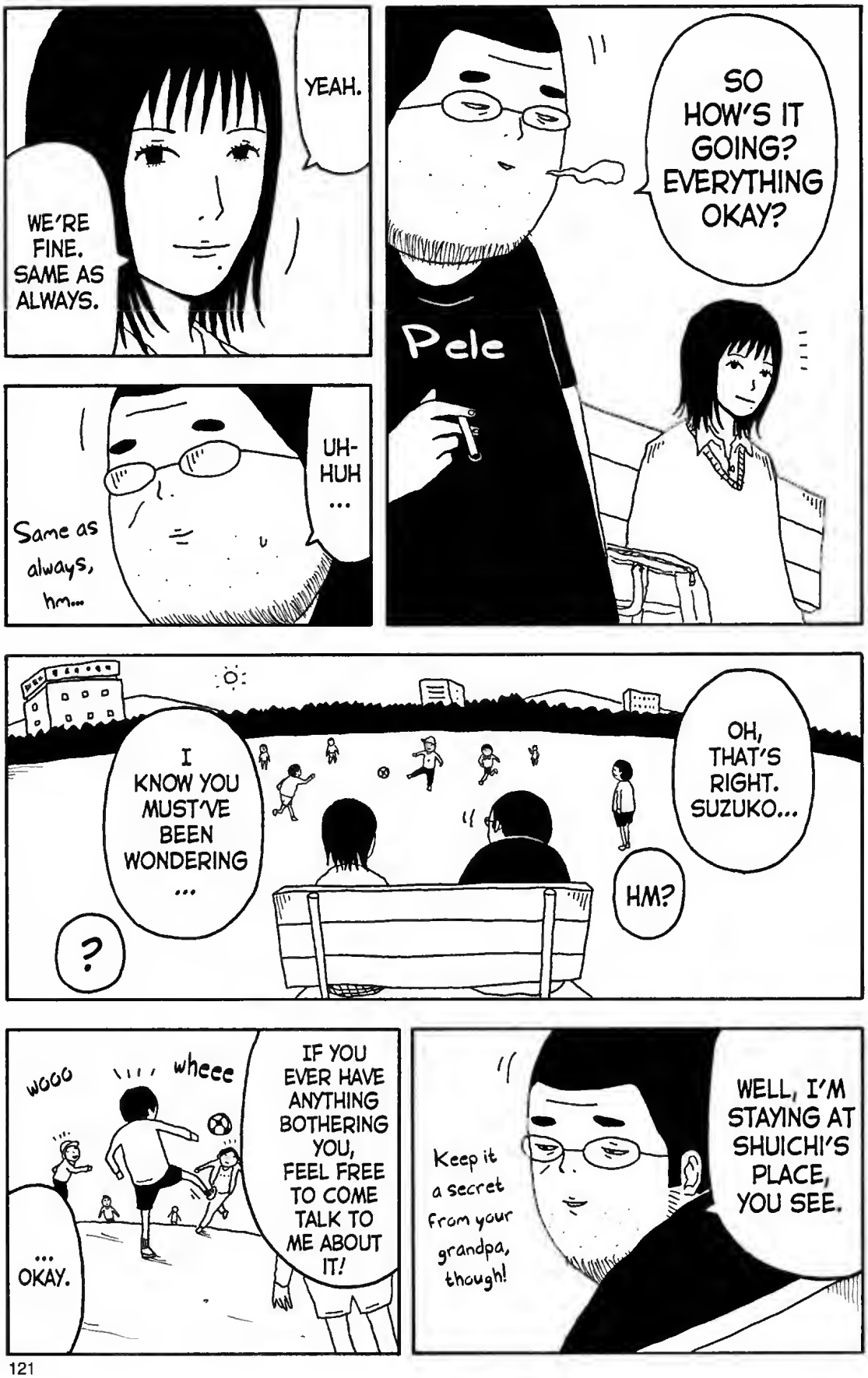
I LIKE CLEANING UP, SEE...
SO COULD YOU MAYBE SET THE TABLE AFTER I'M DONE?

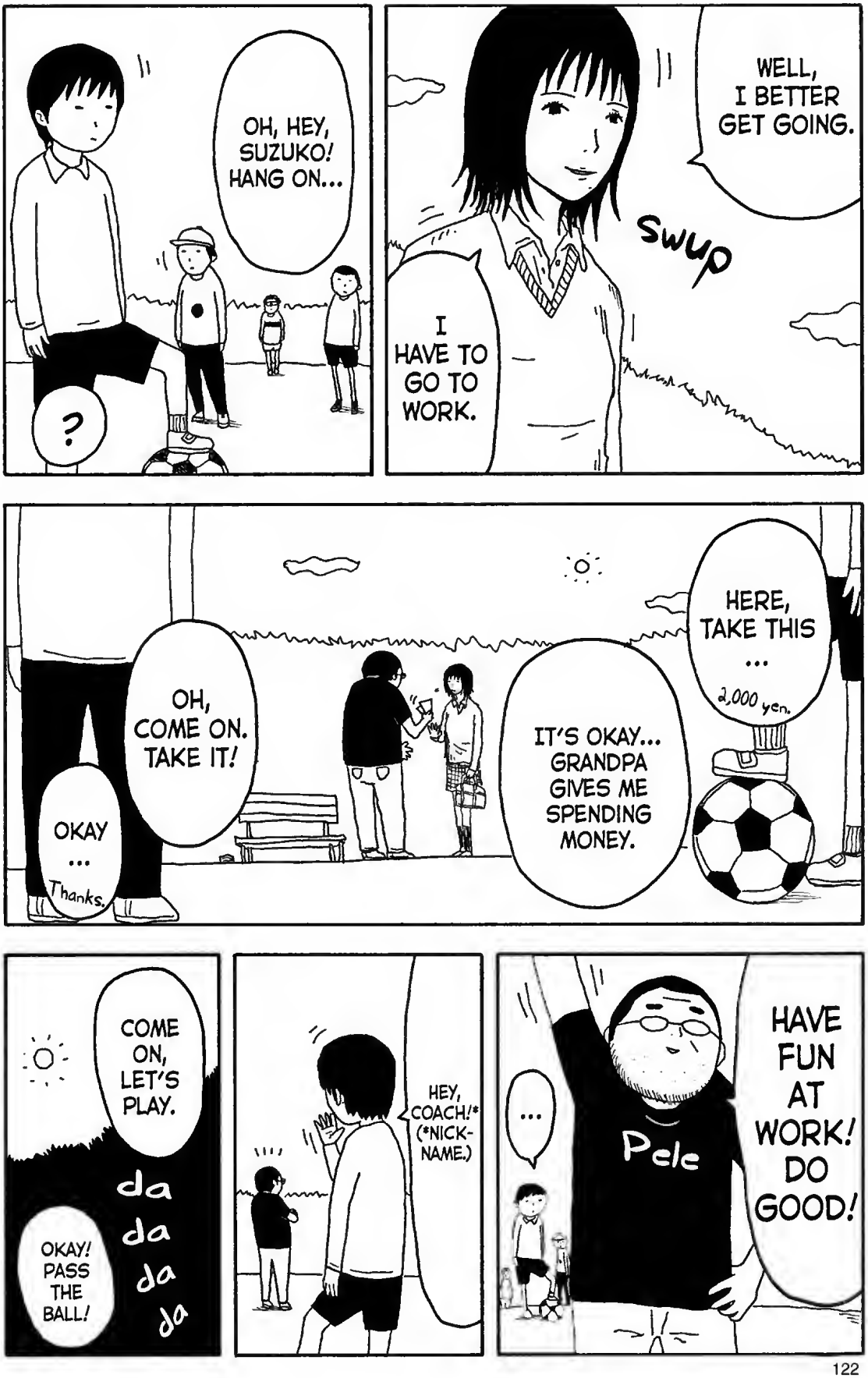

ZUM-CHAKA
ZUM-CHAKA

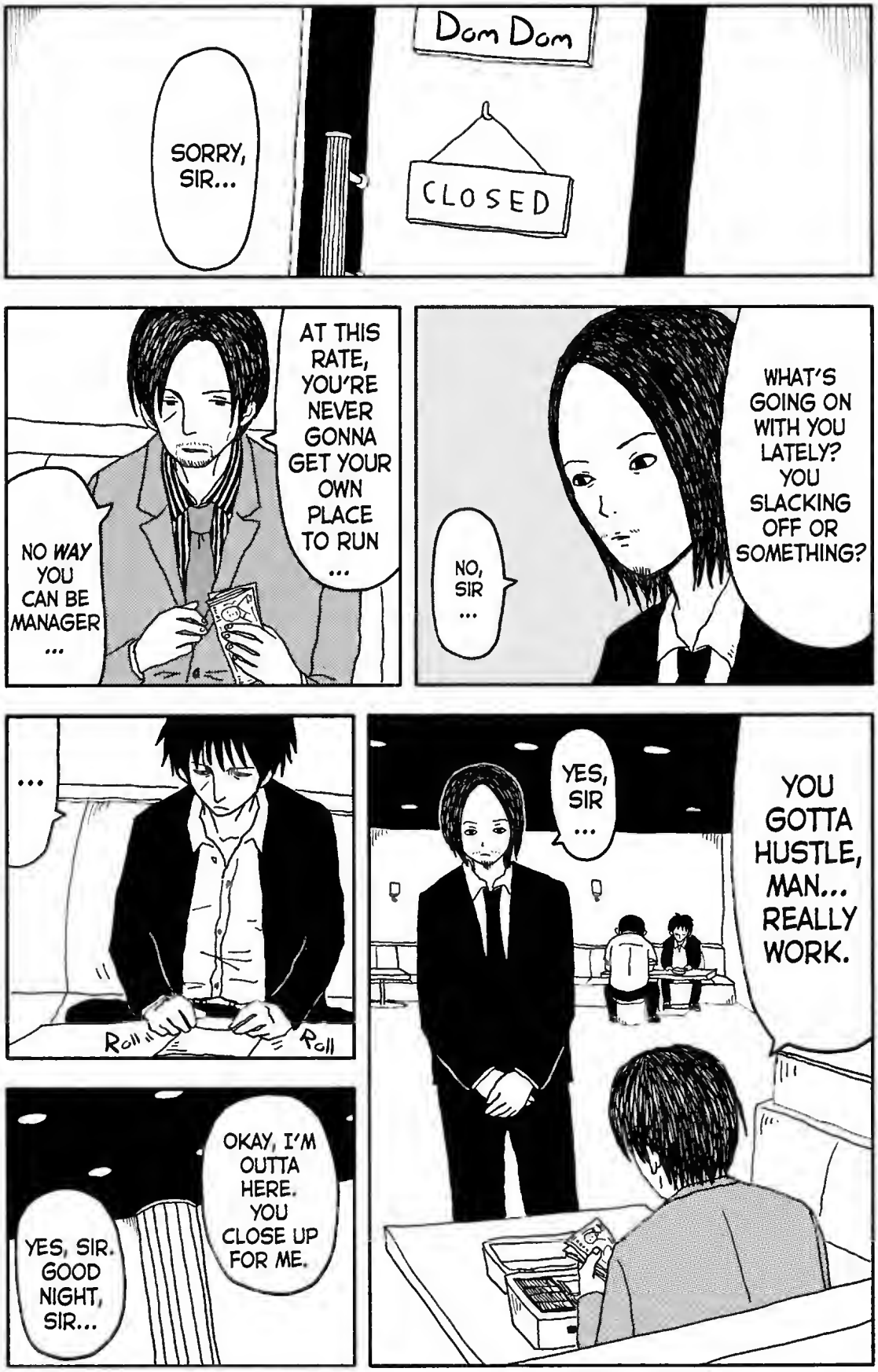
thwok


wooo
wheee


wooo
wheee
...


YEAH.
WE'RE FINE. SAME AS ALWAYS.
SO HOW'S IT GOING? EVERYTHING OKAY?
Pele
UH-HUH ...
Same as always, hm...
I KNOW YOU MUST'VE BEEN WONDERING ...
?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. SUZUKO...
HM?
woOO
wheee
IF YOU EVER HAVE ANYTHING BOTHERING YOU, FEEL FREE TO COME TALK TO ME ABOUT IT!
... OKAY.
Keep it a secret from your grandpa, though!
WELL, I'M STAYING AT SHUICHI'S PLACE, YOU SEE.

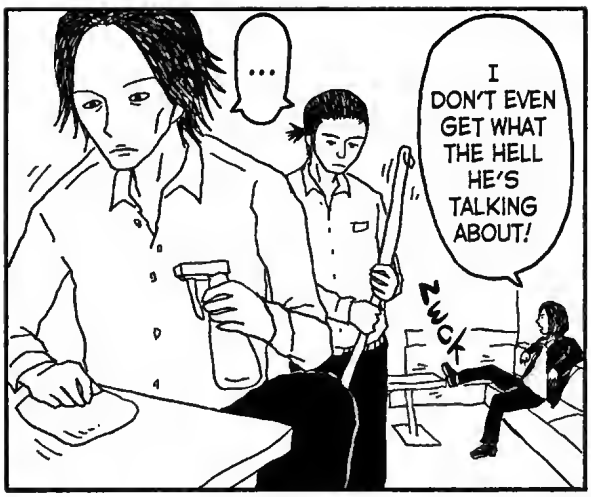

OH, HEY, SUZUKO! HANG ON...
?
WELL, I BETTER GET GOING.
SWUP
I HAVE TO GO TO WORK.
HERE, TAKE THIS ...
2,000 yen.
IT'S OKAY... GRANDPA GIVES ME SPENDING MONEY.
OH, COME ON. TAKE IT!
OKAY ... Thanks.
COME ON, LET'S PLAY.
da da da da
OKAY! PASS THE BALL!
HEY, COACH!* (*NICK-NAME.)
...
Pele
HAVE FUN AT WORK! DO GOOD!

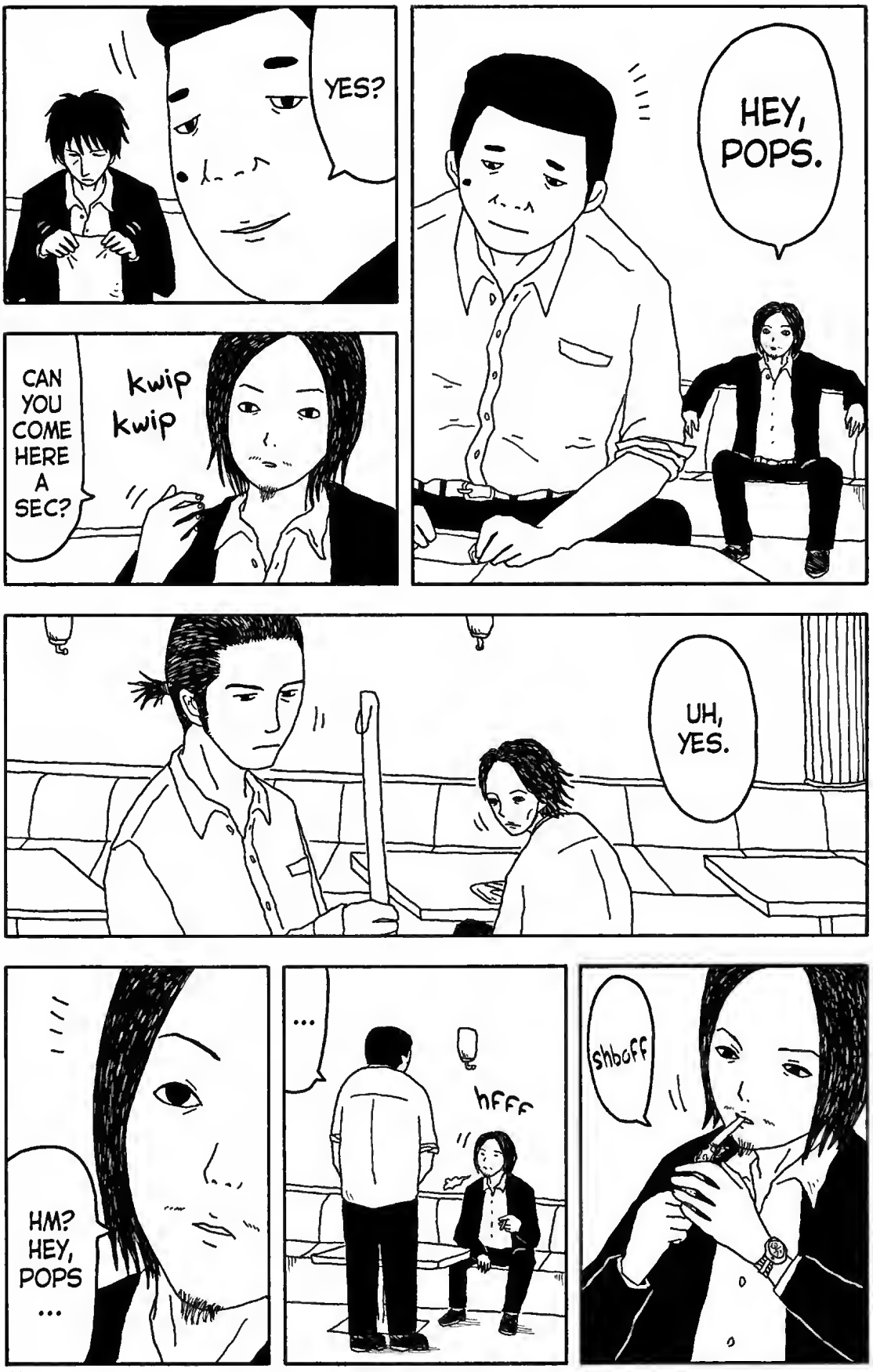

Dom Dom
CLOSED
SORRY, SIR...
AT THIS RATE, YOU'RE NEVER GONNA GET YOUR OWN PLACE TO RUN ...
NO WAY YOU CAN BE MANAGER ...
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU LATELY? YOU SLACKING OFF OR SOMETHING?
NO, SIR ...
...
Roll
Roll
YES, SIR ...
YOU GOTTA HUSTLE, MAN... REALLY WORK.
OKAY, I'M OUTTA HERE. YOU CLOSE UP FOR ME.
YES, SIR. GOOD NIGHT, SIR...

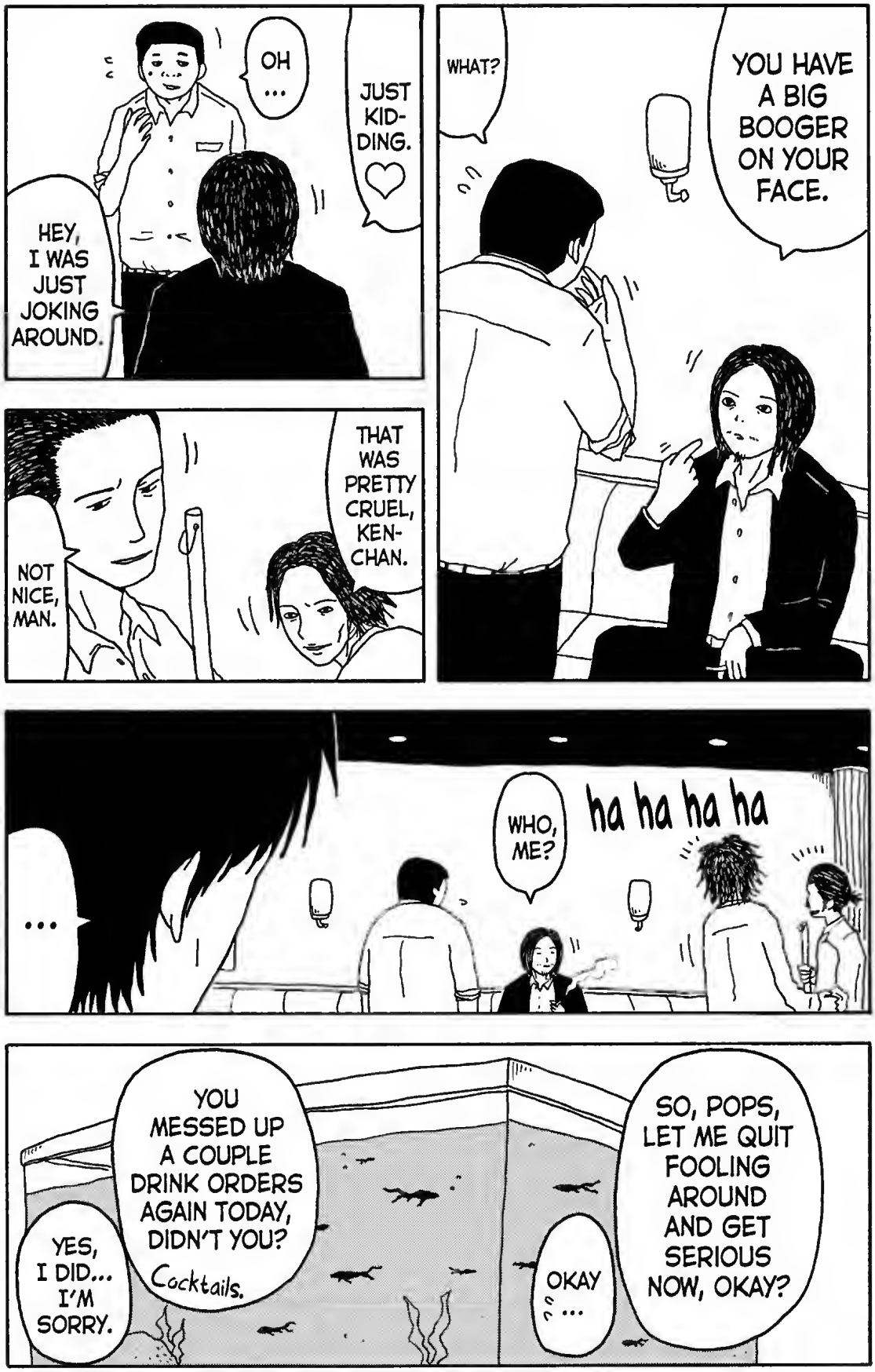
MAN, THAT DUDE PISSES ME OFF...
whump
ARR-RRR-RGH!

I'M WORKING MY ASS OFF HERE!
WHY'S HE ALWAYS ON MY CASE?
zwck

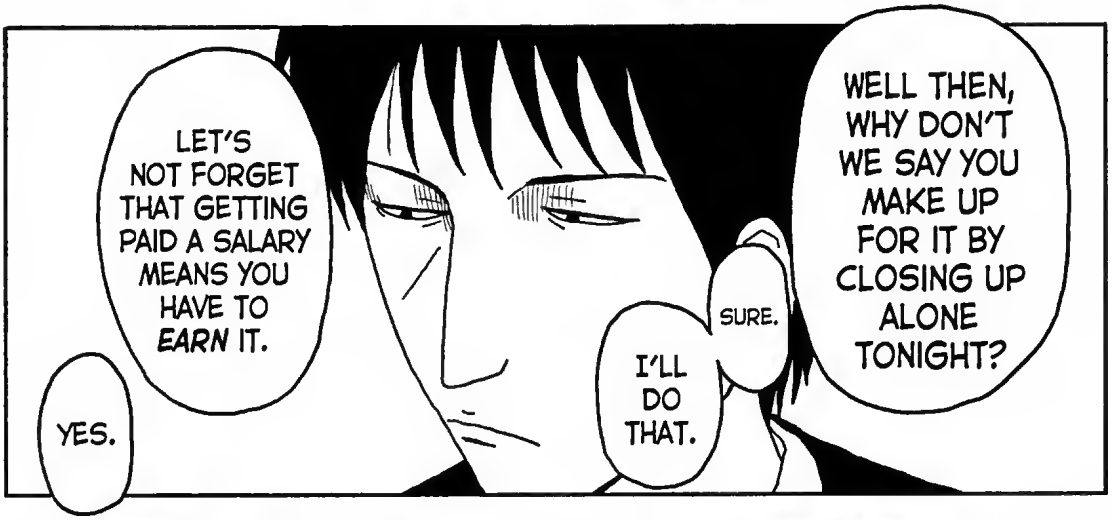
...

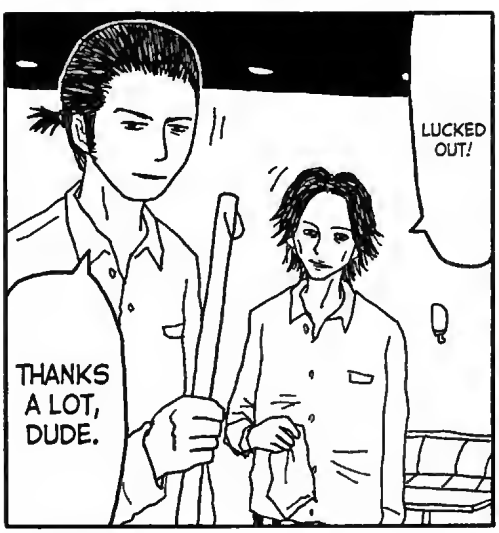

...
I DON'T EVEN GET WHAT THE HELL HE'S TALKING ABOUT!
zwck

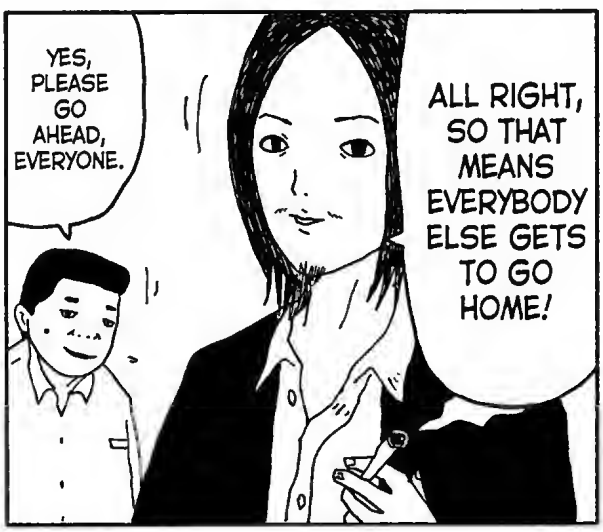

YES?
HEY, POPS.
CAN YOU COME HERE A SEC?
kwip kwip
UH, YES.
HM? HEY, POPS ...
...
hfff
shbaff


HEY, I WAS JUST JOKING AROUND.
OH ...
JUST KID-DING.
NOT NICE, MAN.
THAT WAS PRETTY CRUEL, KEN-CHAN.
WHAT?
YOU HAVE A BIG BOOGER ON YOUR FACE.
...
WHO, ME?
ha ha ha ha
YES, I DID... I'M SORRY.
YOU MESSED UP A COUPLE DRINK ORDERS AGAIN TODAY, DIDN'T YOU?
Cocktails.
OKAY ...
SO, POPS, LET ME QUIT FOOLING AROUND AND GET SERIOUS NOW, OKAY?

...
I TOLD YOU WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED, DIDN'T I? THAT YOU NEED TO MEMORIZE ALL THE COCKTAILS. REALLY GET THEM DOWN— A HUNDRED PERCENT. DIDN'T I?
JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T DRINK IS NO EXCUSE. THIS IS A JOB, OKAY?
roll
roll
YES, YOU DID ...
YES ...


WELL THEN, WHY DON'T WE SAY YOU MAKE UP FOR IT BY CLOSING UP ALONE TONIGHT?
SURE.
I'LL DO THAT.
LET'S NOT FORGET THAT GETTING PAID A SALARY MEANS YOU HAVE TO *EARN* IT.
YES.

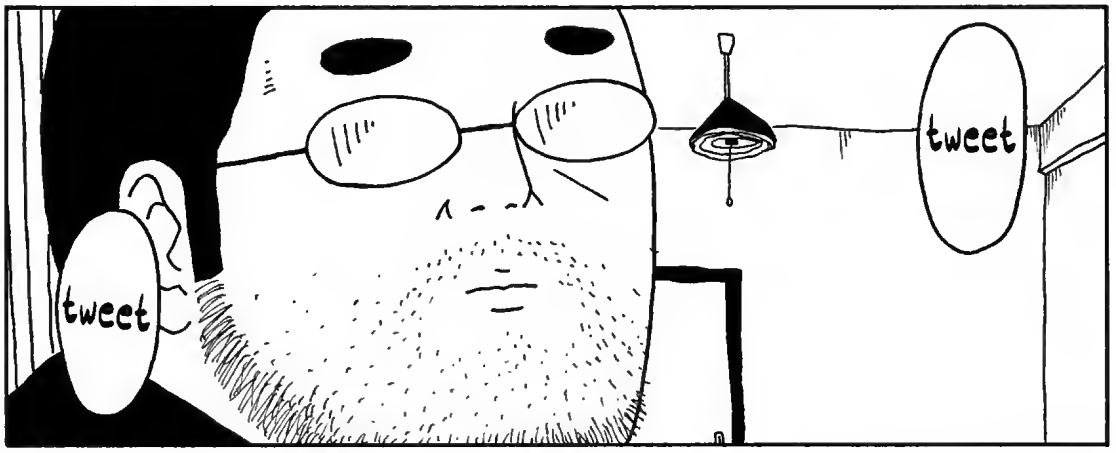

LUCKED OUT!
THANKS A LOT, DUDE.

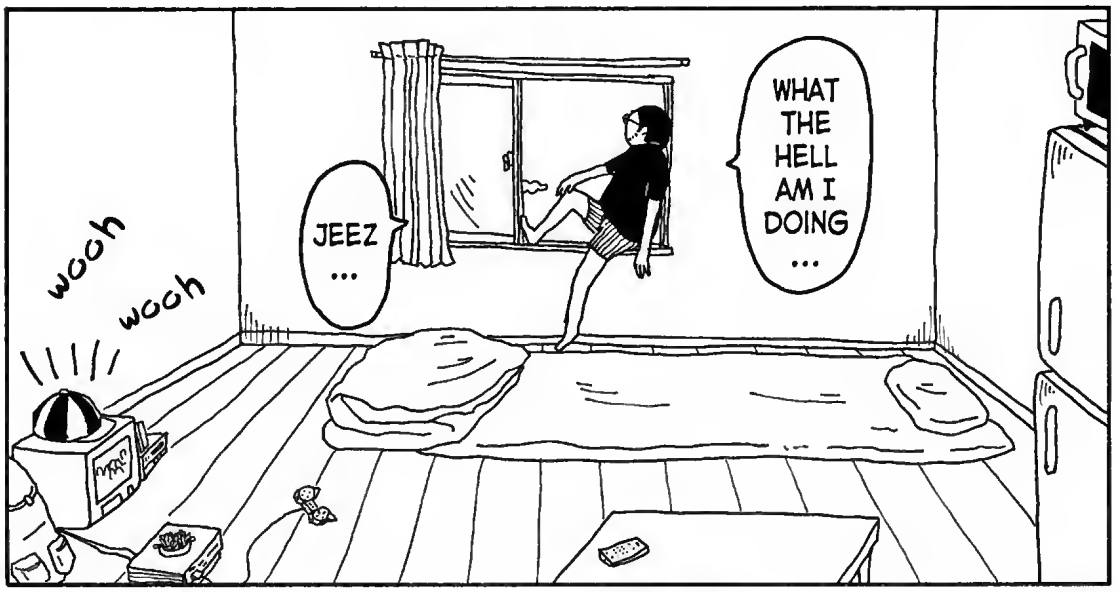

YES, PLEASE GO AHEAD, EVERYONE.
ALL RIGHT, SO THAT MEANS EVERYBODY ELSE GETS TO GO HOME!

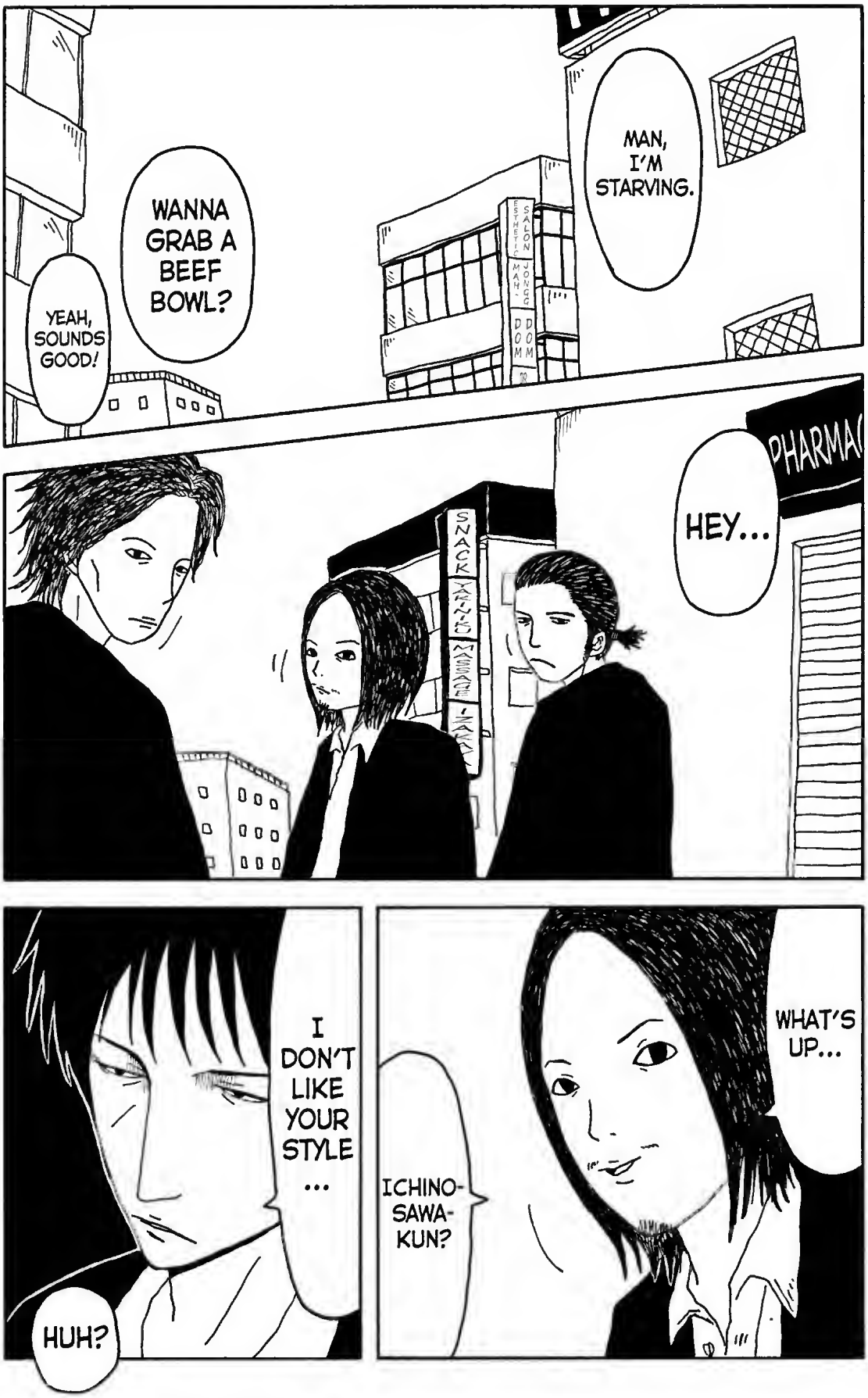
scrub
Scrub
TOILET
ICHINO-SAWA-SAN ...
...
KNOCK
I'LL HELP YOU...
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
BUT I'VE GOT IT UNDER CONTROL. I'LL BE OUT OF HERE IN NO TIME!
ARE YOU SURE?
YES.

I'LL SEE YOU TOMORROW!
Smile
...
SEE YOU TOMORROW ...

WOOH
WOOH
And Oguro FC takes the champion-ship!


tweet
tweet


wooh
wooh
JEEZ ...
WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING ...


MAN, I'M STARVING.
WANNA GRAB A BEEF BOWL?
YEAH, SOUNDS GOOD!
HEY...
I DON'T LIKE YOUR STYLE ...
HUH?
WHAT'S UP...
ICHINO-SAWA-KUN?

!!
WOK
HEY !
KRAK
WHAK
CUT IT OUT !!

ZWOK
ZWAK
KRAK
THUNK
WHAT THE HELL D'YA THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
YOU OUTTA YOUR MIND OR SOME-THING?!

...

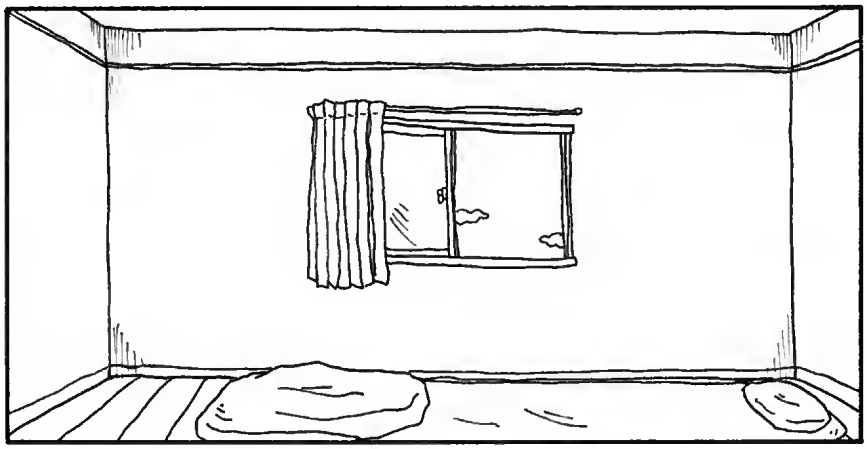
chrp
...
chrp

!
Fwump

slip

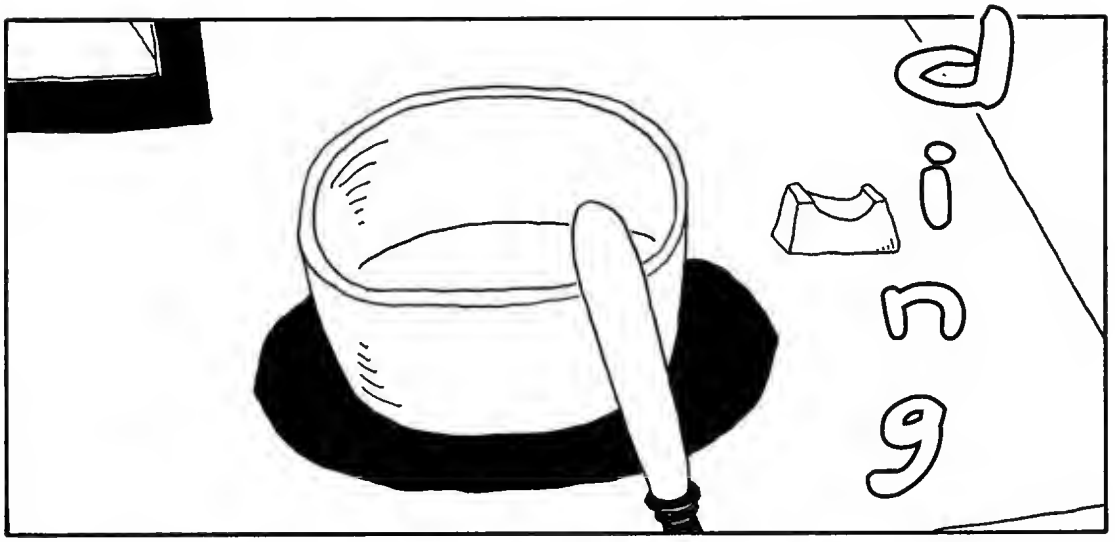
I'M GOING TO BED ...
turn

WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING...
...

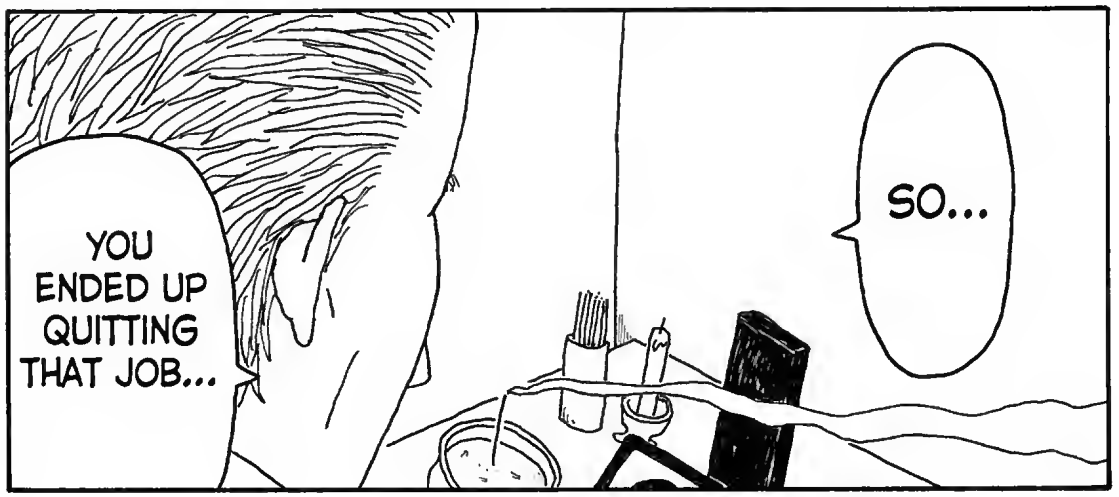


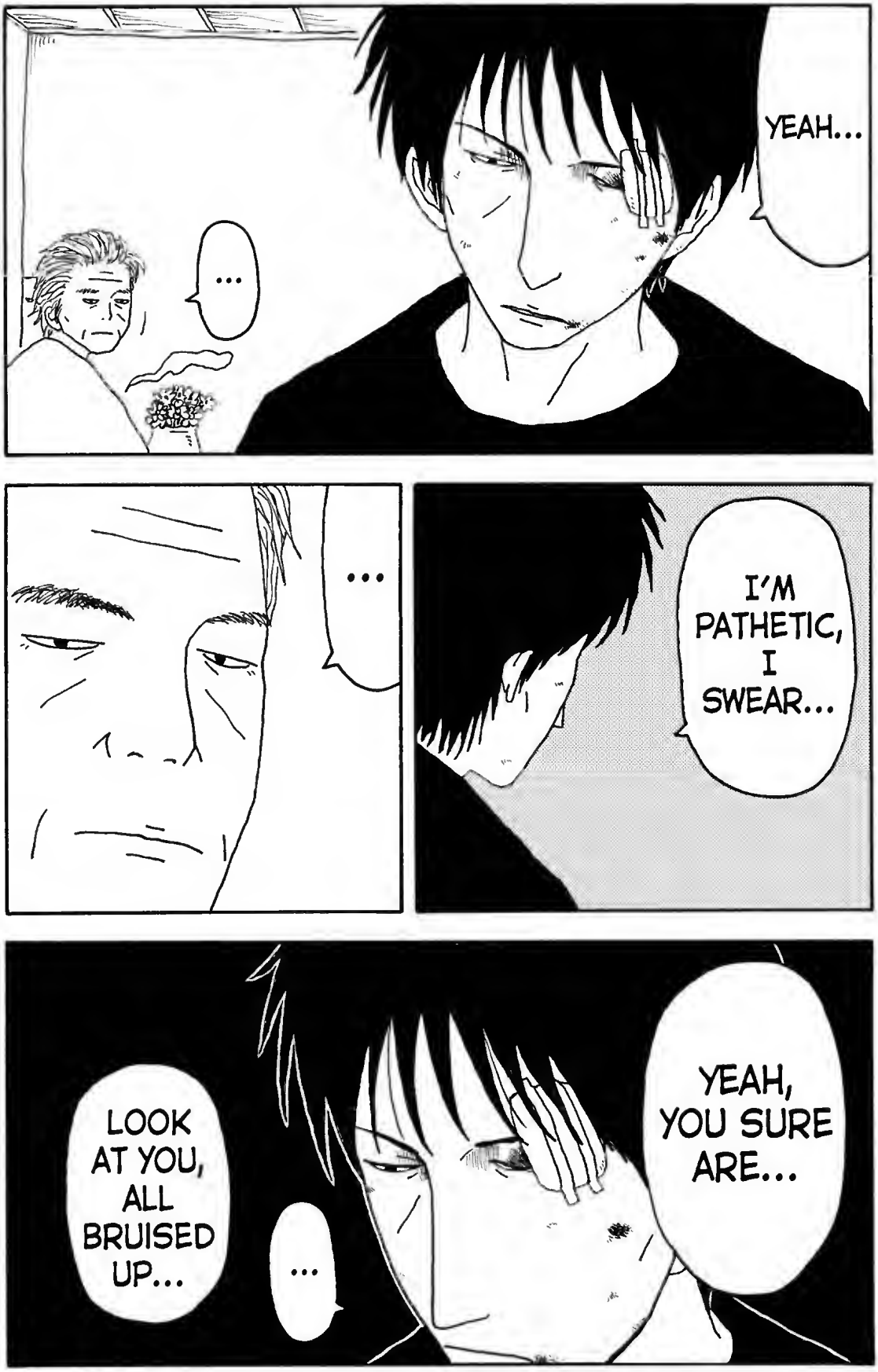
Chapter 10:

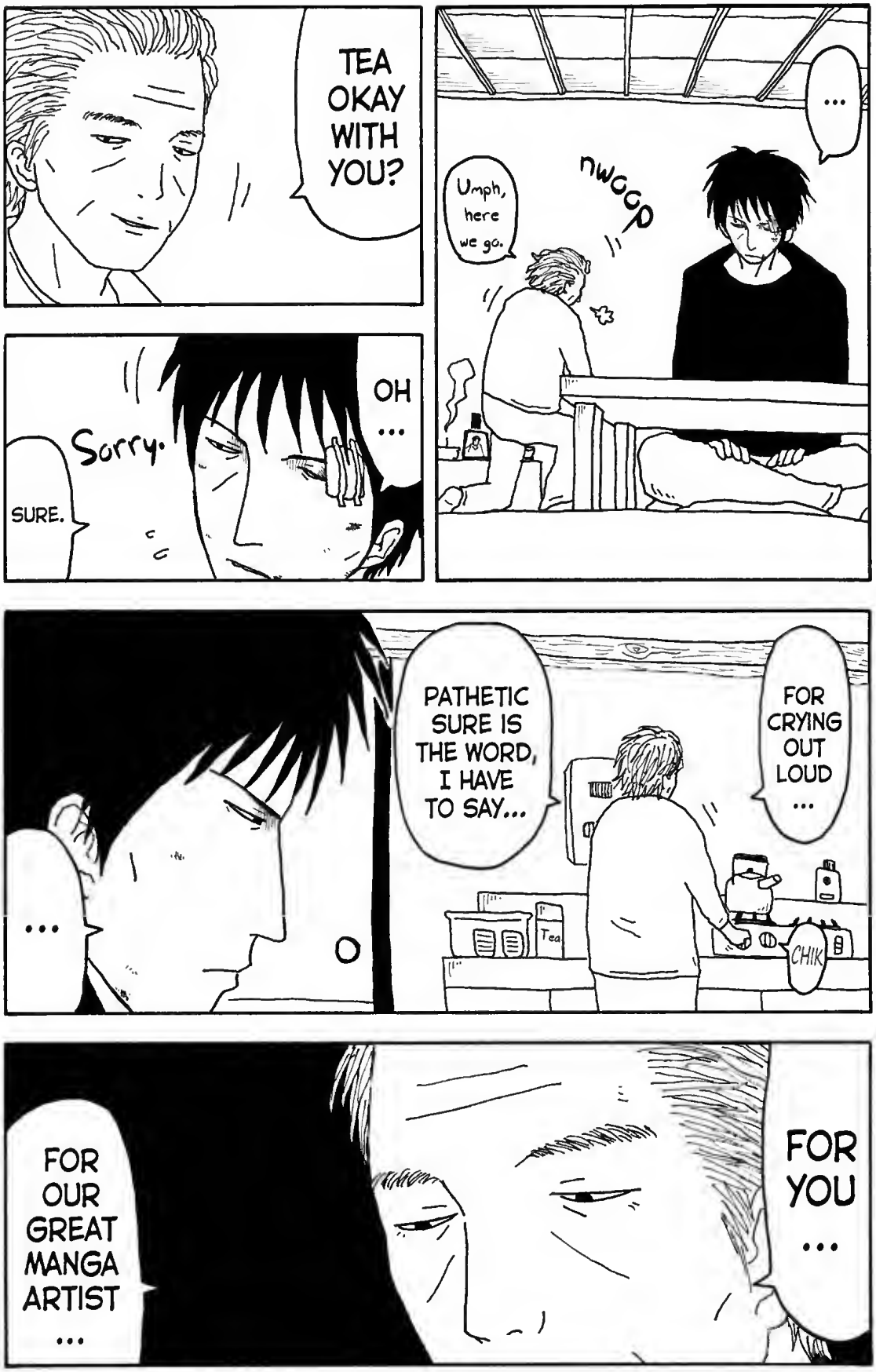
Hey, Master

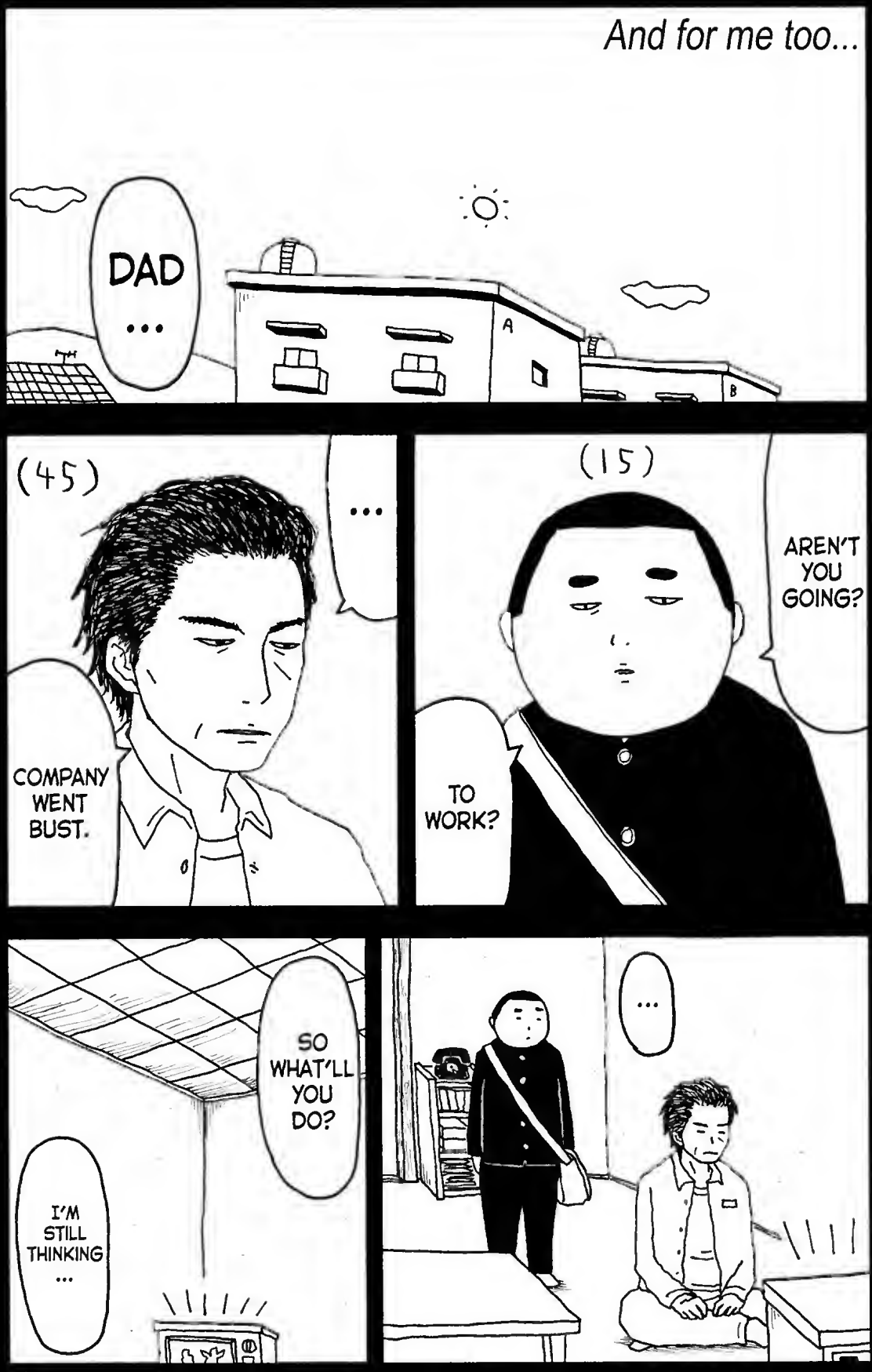

ding

yuzu
karin
ume


YOU ENDED UP QUITTING THAT JOB...
SO...

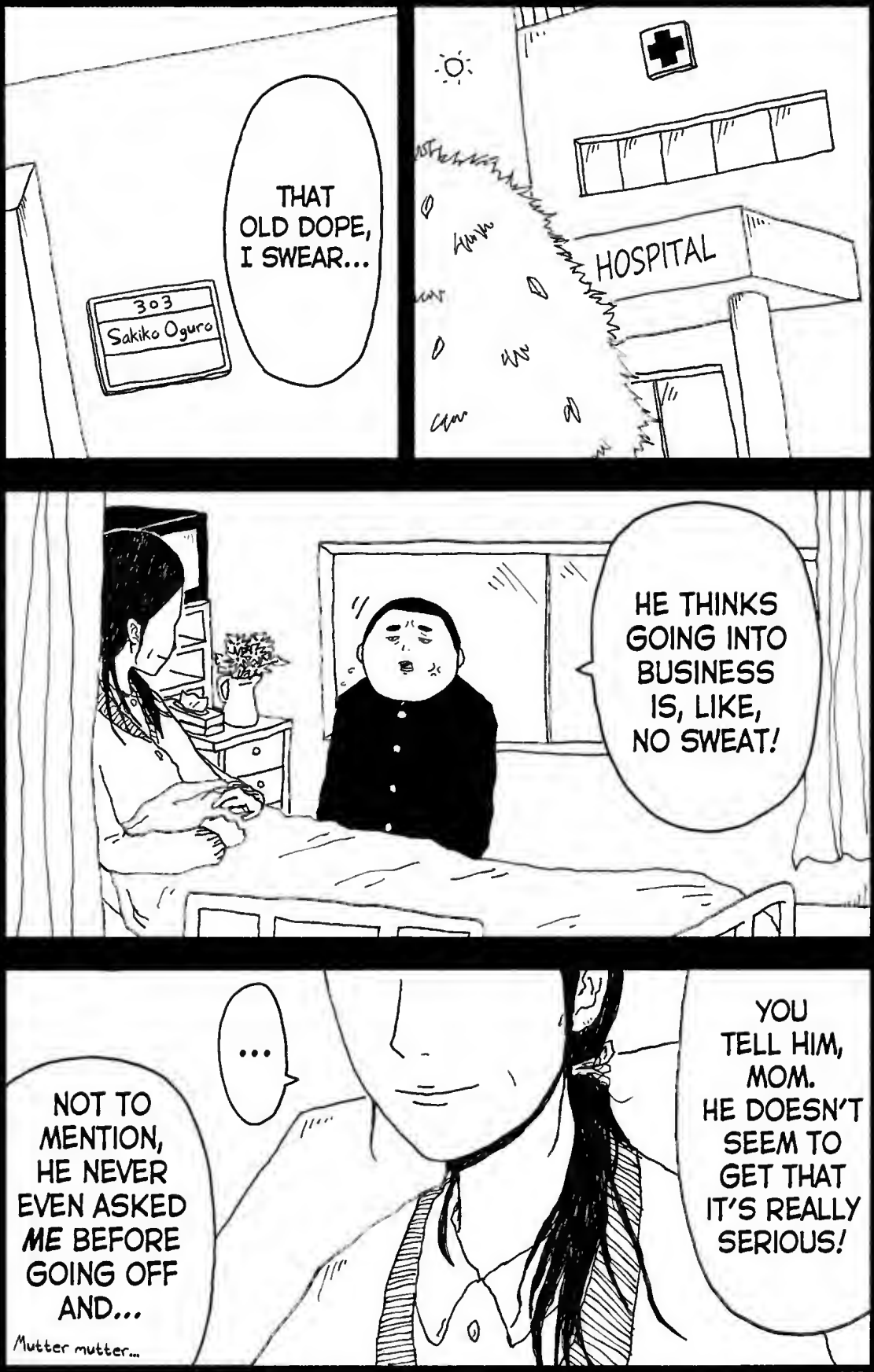

YEAH...
...
...
I'M PATHETIC, I SWEAR...
YEAH, YOU SURE ARE...
...
LOOK AT YOU, ALL BRUISED UP...


TEA OKAY WITH YOU?
...
nwoop
Umph, here we go.
OH ...
Sorry.
SURE.
...
O
PATHETIC SURE IS THE WORD, I HAVE TO SAY...
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD ...
Tea
CHIK
FOR OUR GREAT MANGA ARTIST ...
FOR YOU ...


And for me too...
DAD
...
A
B
(45)
...
COMPANY WENT BUST.
(15)
AREN'T YOU GOING?
TO WORK?
SO WHAT'LL YOU DO?
I'M STILL THINKING ...
...

Izakaya
Yakitori Shiro
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, SON?
Shiro
...
Shiro →
MY VERY OWN PLACE!
Bar
President's Office
Izakaya
Yakitori Shiro
YOU EVEN KNOW HOW TO MAKE YAKITORI?
...
DAD...
WHAT?
gas

NOBODY CAN JUST DO THINGS RIGHT OFF THE BAT. PEOPLE AREN'T MADE THAT WAY.
...
LISTEN TO ME, SHIZUO MY BOY.
Yeah, but...
WHY'D YOU OPEN AN *IZAKAYA*, THOUGH ...
YOU GOTTA TRY, RIGHT? IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT!
klench
kaw
kaw
...
PLUS, THIS WAY I CAN GO VISIT YOUR MOM DURING THE DAY.
Sake
Shochu
BEER
Whiskey
WELL, THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME FOR ME TO PUT THAT EXPERIENCE TO GOOD USE...
BACK IN MY WILD YOUTH, I DID MORE THAN MY FAIR SHARE OF DRINKING AT A WIDE VARIETY OF ESTABLISHMENTS, SEE.
Not that I'm proud of it.

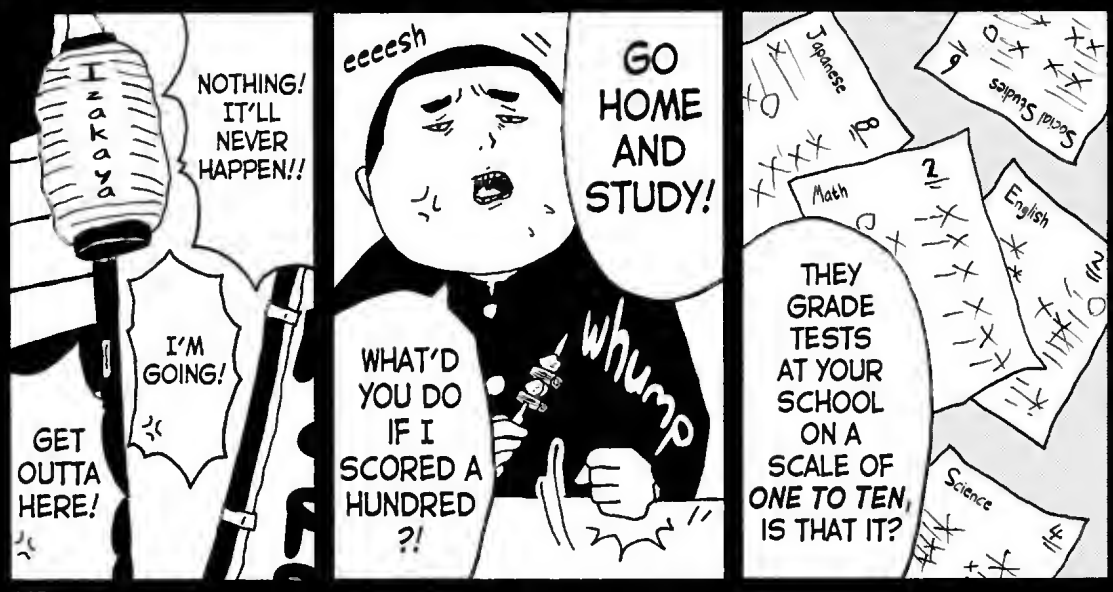

THAT OLD DOPE, I SWEAR...
303
Sakiko Oguro
HOSPITAL
HE THINKS GOING INTO BUSINESS IS, LIKE, NO SWEAT!
YOU TELL HIM, MOM. HE DOESN'T SEEM TO GET THAT IT'S REALLY SERIOUS!
...
NOT TO MENTION, HE NEVER EVEN ASKED ME BEFORE GOING OFF AND...
Mutter mutter...

WHENEVER HE COMES HERE TO SEE ME, ALL HE TALKS ABOUT IS YOU, SHIZUO.
HE'S VERY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU...
HE JUST DOESN'T WANT TO CAUSE YOU ANY ANXIETY...
... YOUR FATHER.
I BET YOU'RE ALWAYS FIGHTING WITH HIM, AS USUAL, AREN'T YOU?
...
BE NICE TO YOUR FATHER. I WANT YOU TWO TO GET ALONG...
HAVE YOU GAINED SOME MORE WEIGHT AGAIN?
HAVE I?
EAT YOUR VEGETABLES, SHIZUO. NOT JUST MEAT.
OKAY ...
UH-OH?
?

HERE YOU ARE.
Good, huh?
HOW IS IT?
Yakitori
...
mwush
mwush
YOU JUST GRILL IT, BIG DEAL.
mwush
mwush
...
EDIBLE? WHADDAYA MEAN, EDIBLE?!
Tonsoku
¥500-
Yakitori
¥500-
IT'S EDIBLE.

PUT A SOCK IN IT!
I'M NOT TOO SURE ABOUT THIS PLACE...
BOY, LOOK AT THIS, THOUGH. NOT ONE CUSTOMER.

WHAT THE HECK WERE THOSE TEST SCORES OF YOURS THE OTHER DAY, HUH?
FOR ONE THING, YOU OUGHT TO BE WORRYING ABOUT *YOURSELF* BEFORE WORRYING ABOUT THIS PLACE.

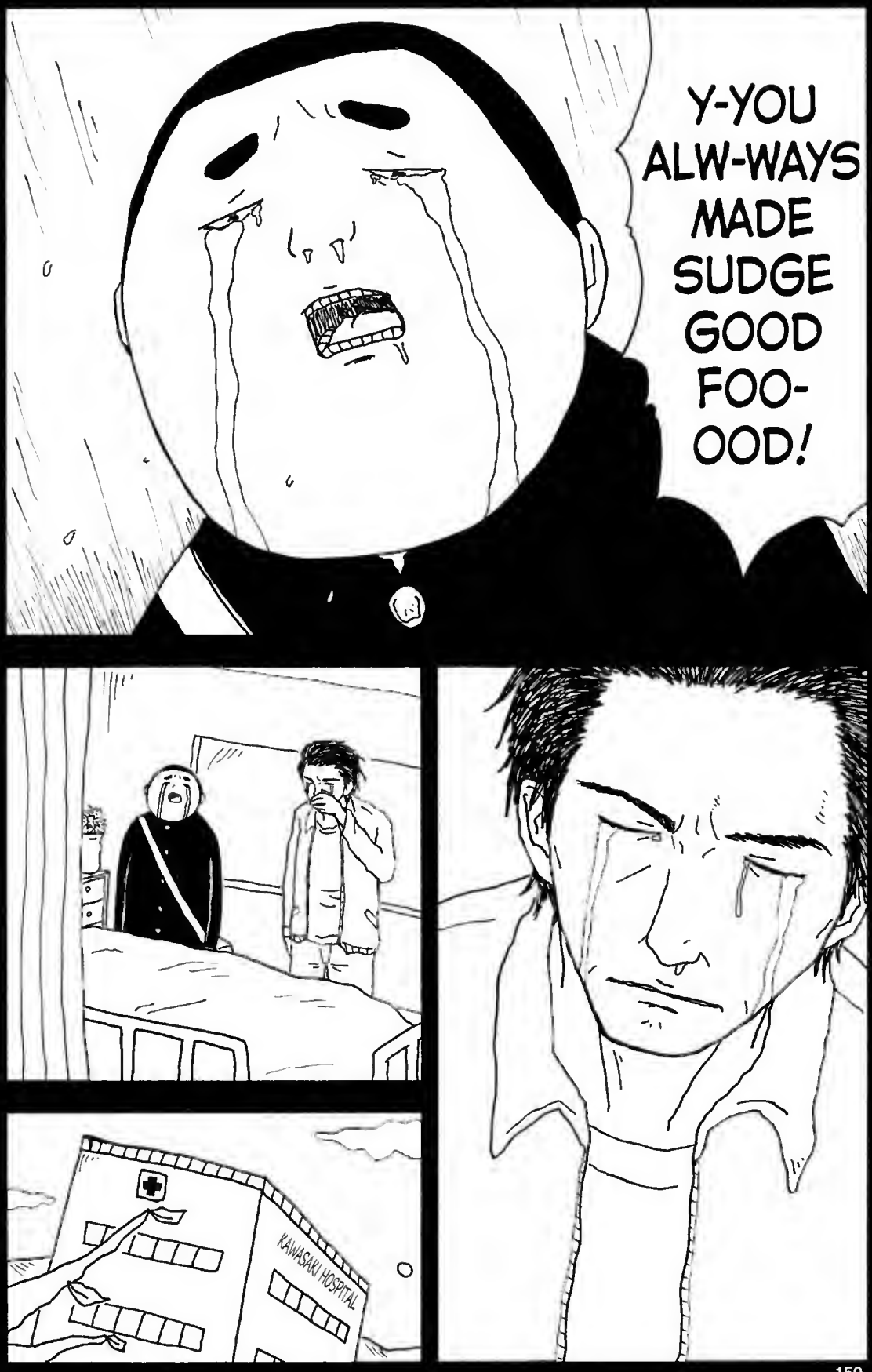

Izakaya
NOTHING! IT'LL NEVER HAPPEN!!
I'M GOING!
GET OUTTA HERE!
eeeesh
GO HOME AND STUDY!
WHAT'D YOU DO IF I SCORED A HUNDRED ?!
whump
Japanese
Social Studies
Math
English
Science
THEY GRADE TESTS AT YOUR SCHOOL ON A SCALE OF *ONE TO TEN*, IS THAT IT?

HALVE
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
Sake
Sake
Shochu
...
rin
Ume
Yakitori
Shiro
BEER
tori!
...
Beer
niro
Yakitori
SKREE
HOW ABOUT SOME DELICIOUS YAKITORI?
STEP RIGHT IN, STEP RIGHT IN!

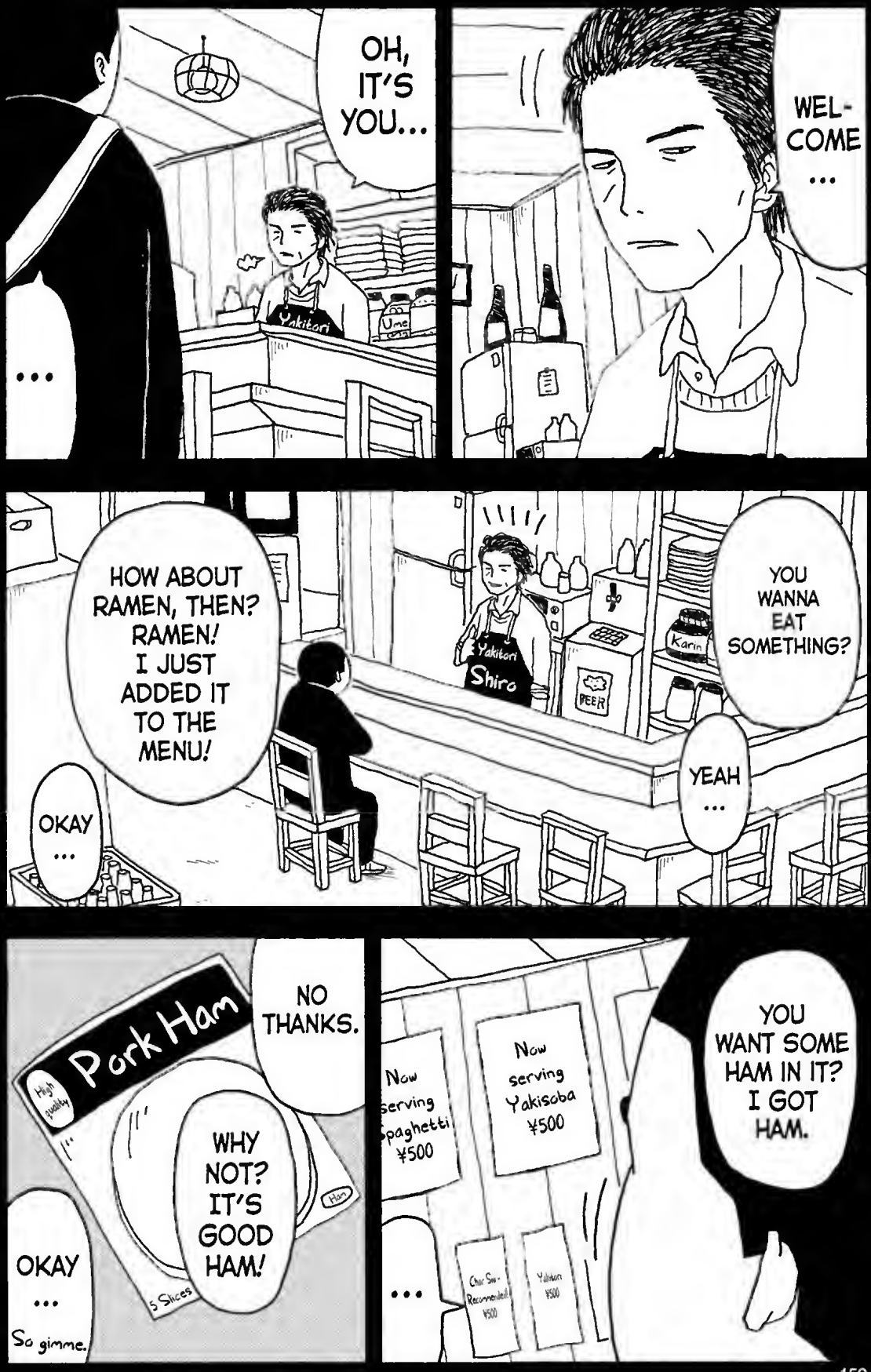
STEP RIGHT IN, STEP RIGHT IN...
...
Yakitori Shiro
YOU'RE GETTING IN MY WAY.
Yakitori Shiro
HEH, HEH ...
A MIDDLE-SCHOOLER STANDING OUTSIDE IS THE LAST THING I NEED TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS.
Just go home.
...

303
Sakiko Oguro
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
SAKIKO
...
SHIZUO'S
HERE!

...
Shwa
SHI-
ZUO
...
COME
HERE
AND SAY
A FEW
WORDS
TO YOUR
MOM...
...
UM-
MM
...
UM-
MM
...
YOU
ALWAYS
MADE
SUCH
GOOD
FOOD...
...
THAT'S
ALL
YOU
HAVE
TO
SAY?
AND
...

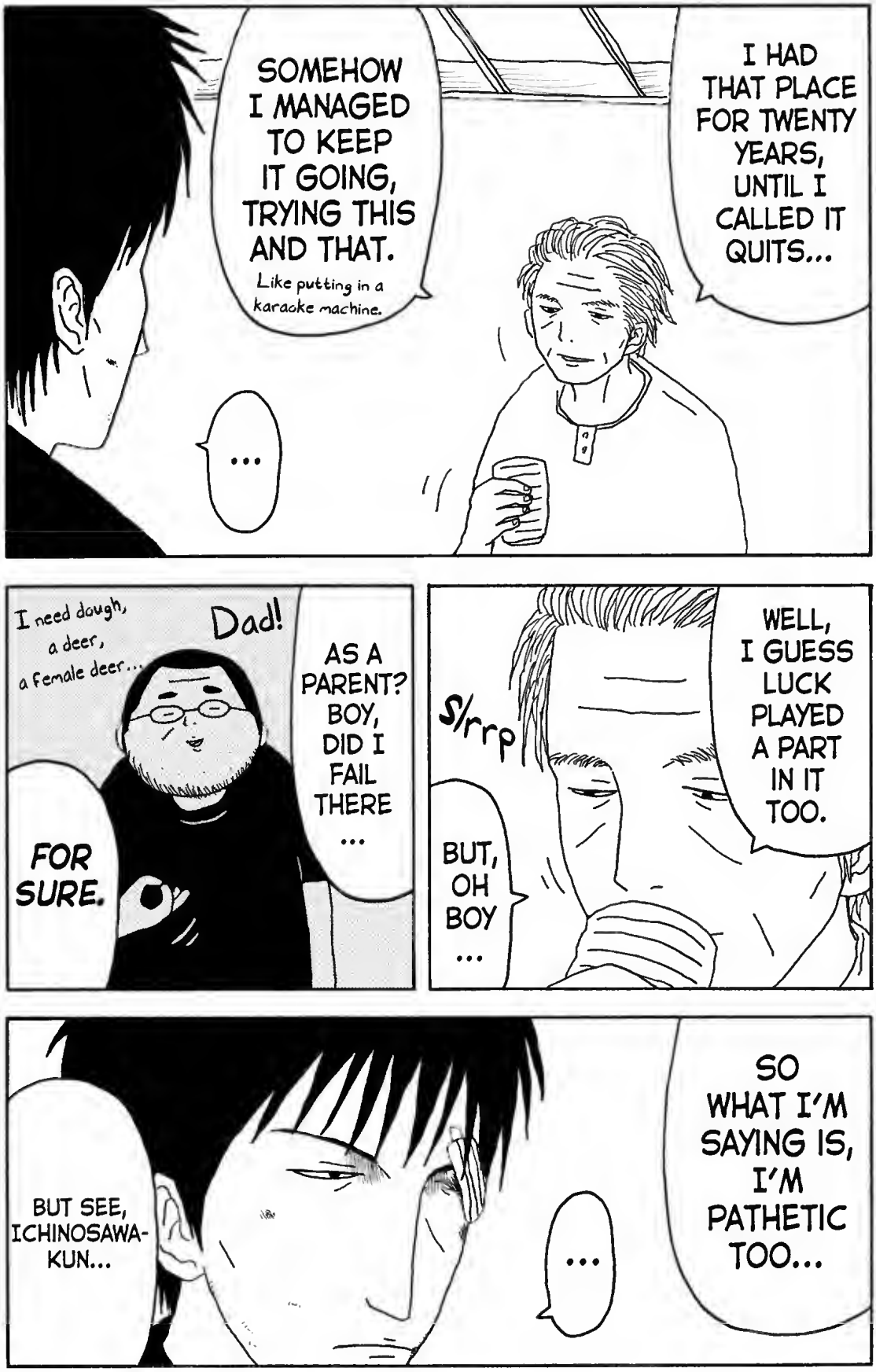

Y-YOU ALW-WAYS MADE SUDGE GOOD FOO- OOD!
KAWASAKI HOSPITAL

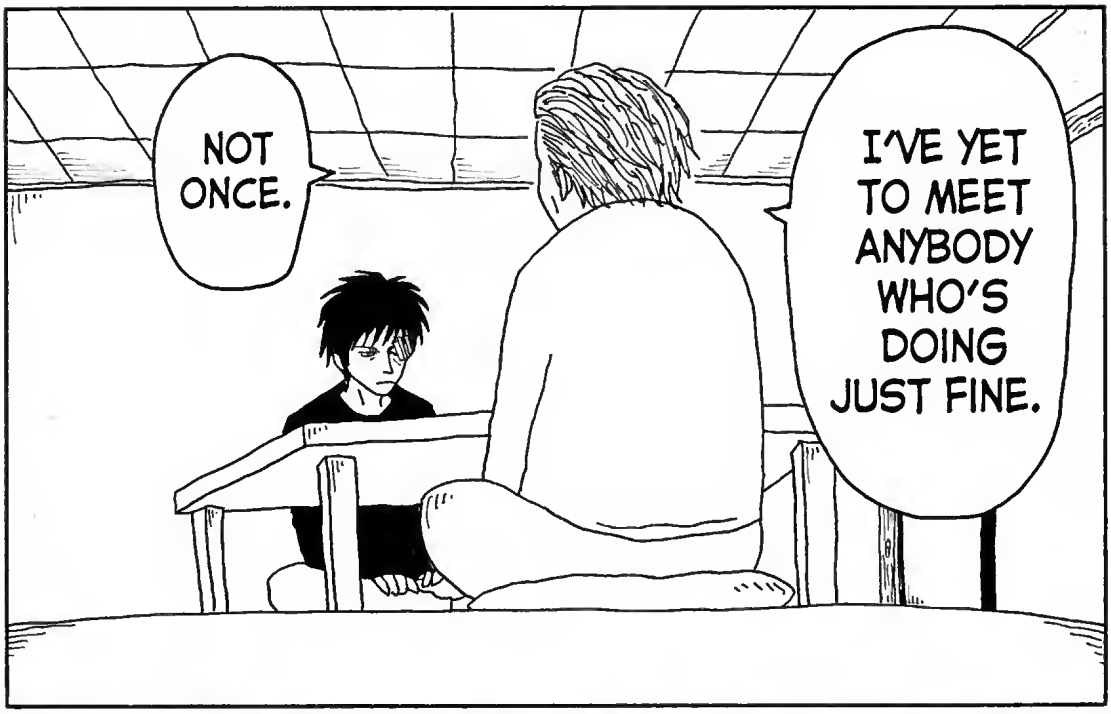
tori Shiro
Now serving RAMEN
Now serving RAMEN
gas
It's a home run!
...
And he hits the ball...
SKREE


OH, IT'S YOU...
...
Yakitori
Ume
WEL-COME ...
HOW ABOUT RAMEN, THEN? RAMEN! I JUST ADDED IT TO THE MENU!
OKAY ...
Yakitori Shiro
Karin
BEER
YOU WANNA EAT SOMETHING?
YEAH ...
Pork Ham
High quality
5 Slices
Han
NO THANKS.
WHY NOT? IT'S GOOD HAM!
OKAY ... So gimme.
Now serving Spaghetti ¥500
Now serving Yakisoba ¥500
Char Siu - Recommended! ¥500
Yakitori ¥500
...
YOU WANT SOME HAM IN IT? I GOT HAM.

153 In Japanese, "master" is someone who owns and runs his own place, whether a bar, a coffee shop, or a small restaurant. And that's what customers call him.

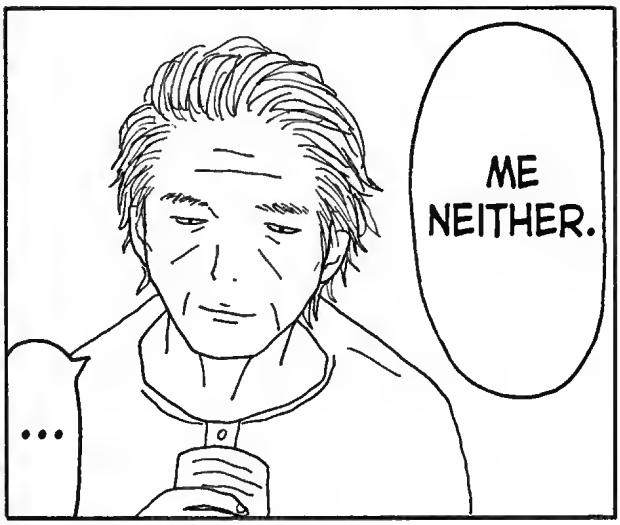
LIVE TO BE REAL OLD, OKAY?
slrrp
slrrp
...
Ice cold
Beer
...YOU TOO, KID.

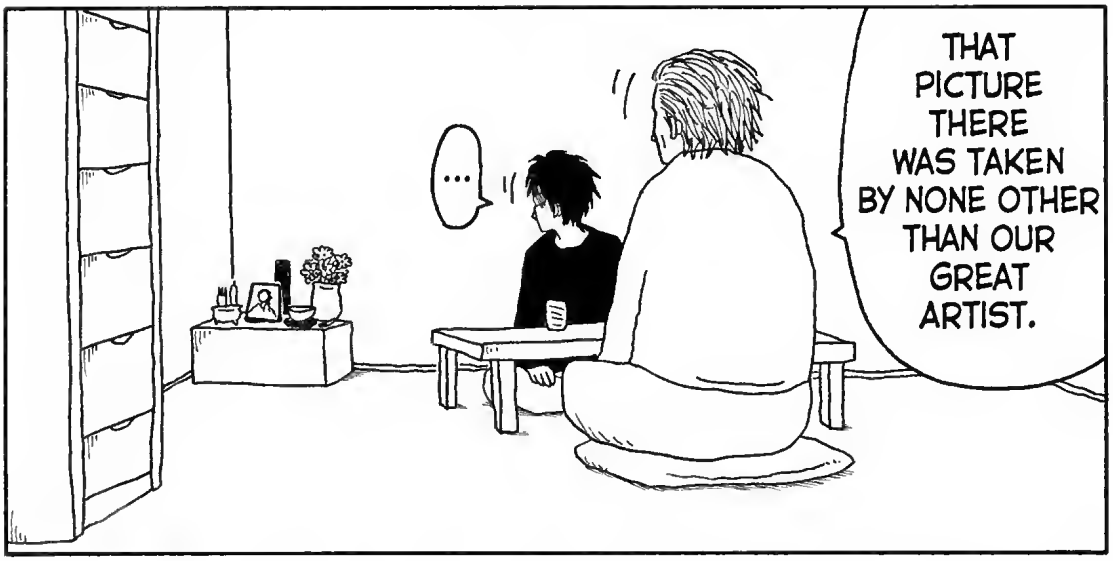

I HAD THAT PLACE FOR TWENTY YEARS, UNTIL I CALLED IT QUITS...
SOMEHOW I MANAGED TO KEEP IT GOING, TRYING THIS AND THAT.
Like putting in a karaoke machine.
...
WELL, I GUESS LUCK PLAYED A PART IN IT TOO.
S/rrp
BUT, OH BOY ...
I need dough, a deer, a female deer...
Dad!
AS A PARENT? BOY, DID I FAIL THERE ...
FOR SURE.
SO WHAT I'M SAYING IS, I'M PATHETIC TOO...
...
BUT SEE, ICHINOSAWA-KUN...


NOT ONCE.
I'VE YET TO MEET ANYBODY WHO'S DOING JUST FINE.

...

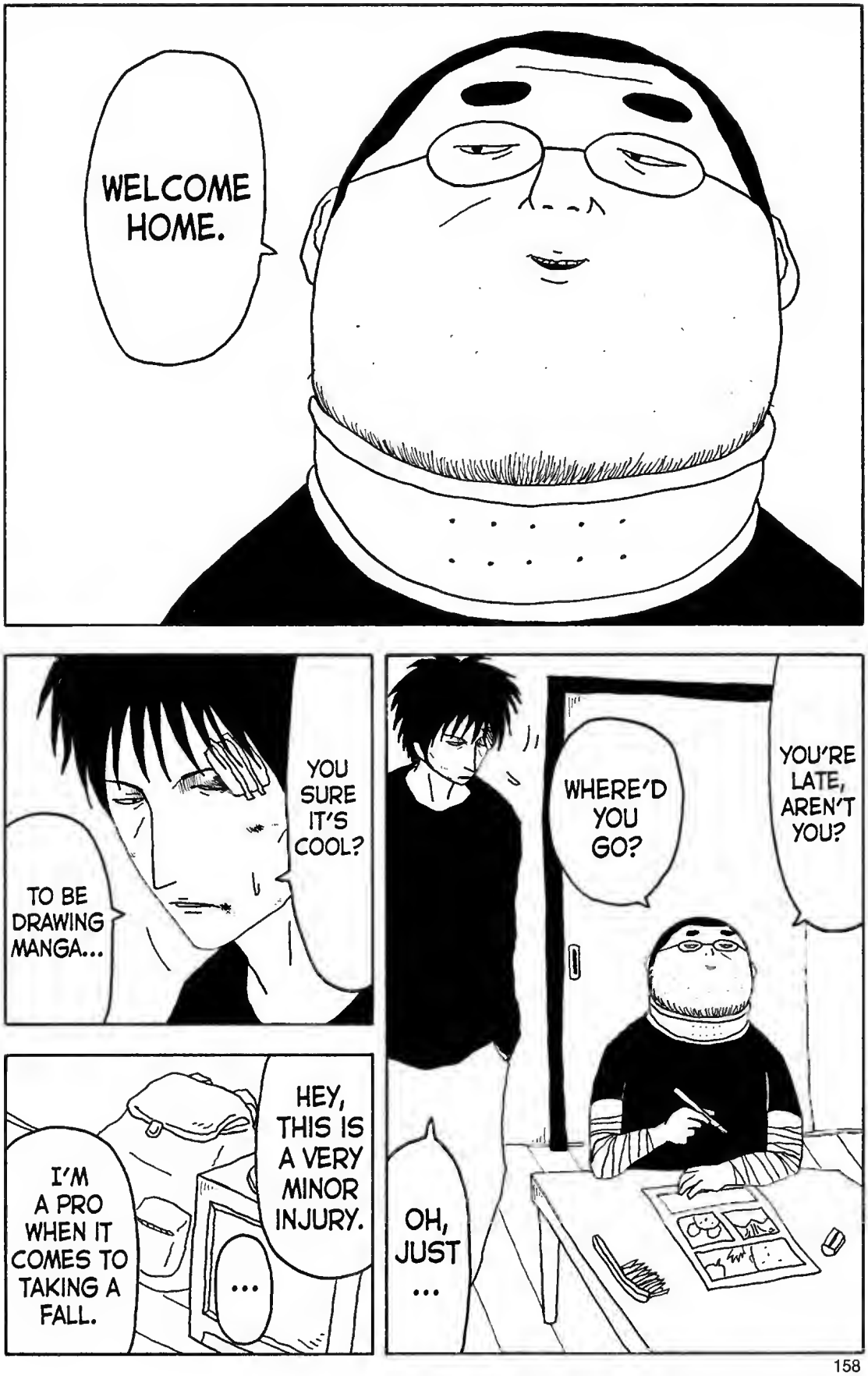
OH YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT ...


ME NEITHER.
...


...
THAT PICTURE THERE WAS TAKEN BY NONE OTHER THAN OUR GREAT ARTIST.

YEAH, IT IS...
IT'S A PRETTY GOOD PICTURE, ISN'T IT?
kario

HA HA!
IT'S THE ONE AND ONLY TIME IN HIS LIFE THAT HE SUCCEEDED AT SOMETHING.


WELCOME HOME.
YOU SURE IT'S COOL?
TO BE DRAWING MANGA...
HEY, THIS IS A VERY MINOR INJURY.
...
I'M A PRO WHEN IT COMES TO TAKING A FALL.
YOU'RE LATE, AREN'T YOU?
WHERE'D YOU GO?
OH, JUST ...

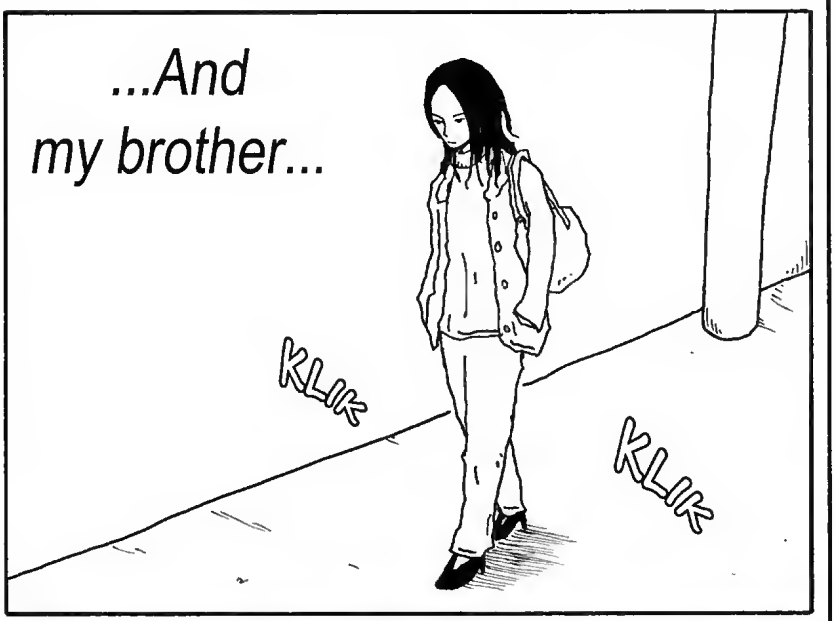
SHIZUO-SAN...
HM?
WANT SOME COFFEE?
YES, PLEASE.
...
SO...THAT OLD MAN OF MINE'S BEEN TALKING TOO MUCH AGAIN, EH?
YOU USED TO BE IN THE PHOTO-GRAPHY CLUB?
COFFEE
SHE WAS REALLY BEAUTIFUL, WASN'T SHE...?
...
YEAH, WELL ...
YOU'RE REALLY GOOD AT TAKING PICTURES.

SHUICHI ...
YEAH?
...
I DON'T WANT ANY COFFEE AFTER ALL...
I'LL WALK YOU HOME.
HINOKI APARTMENTS

KLIK
KLIK

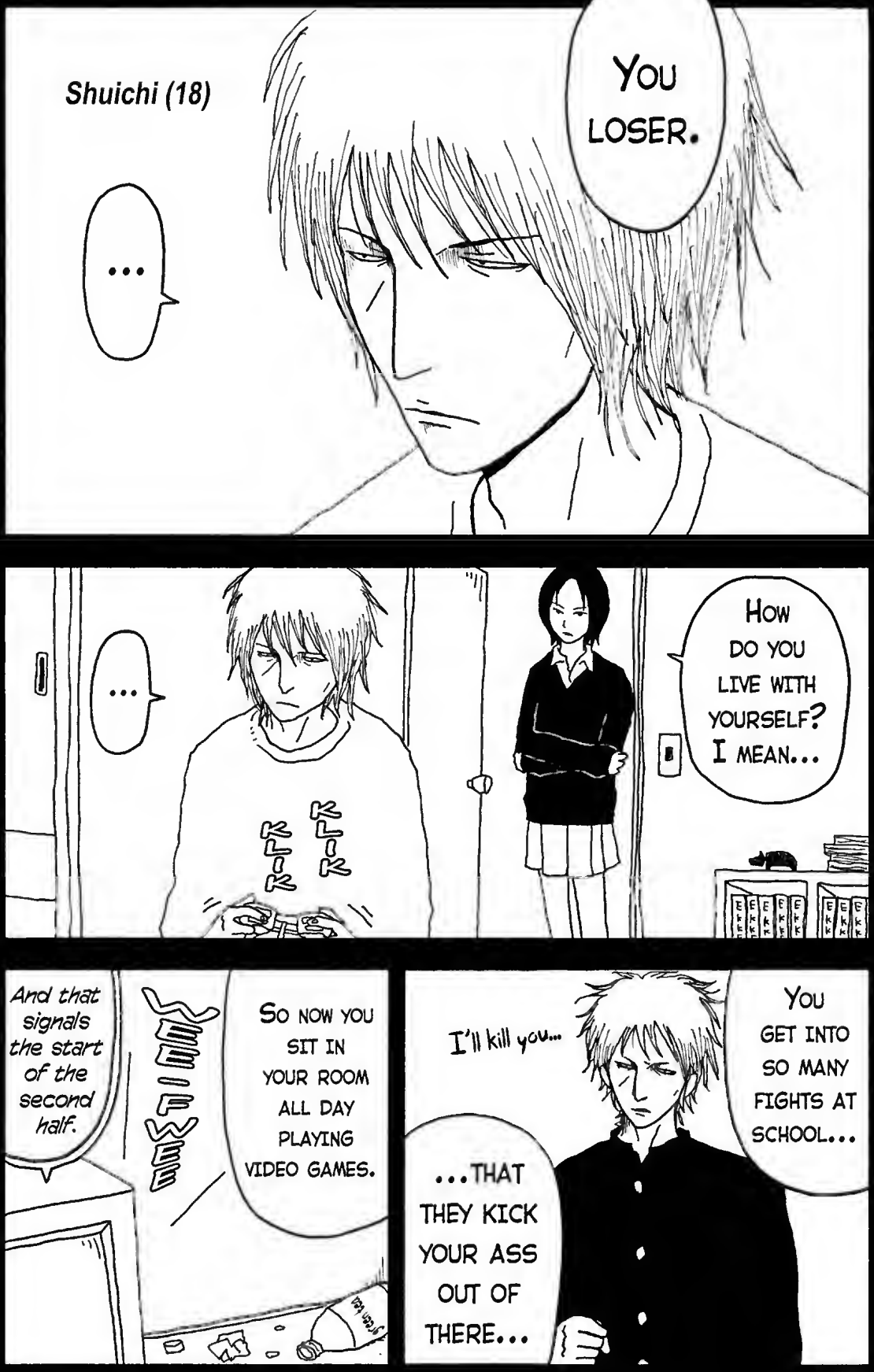
Bonus Chapter:

Back Then Part 1

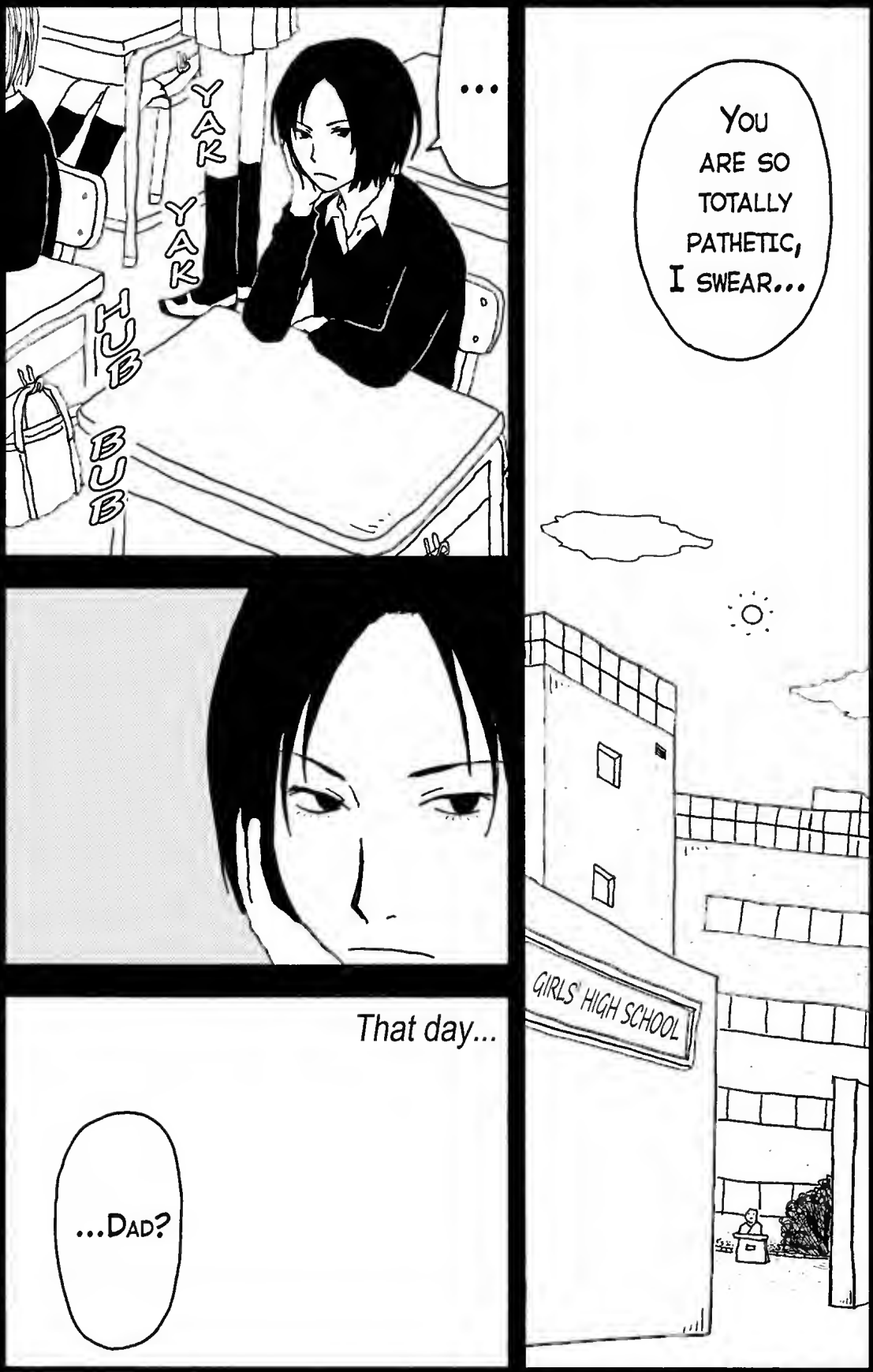


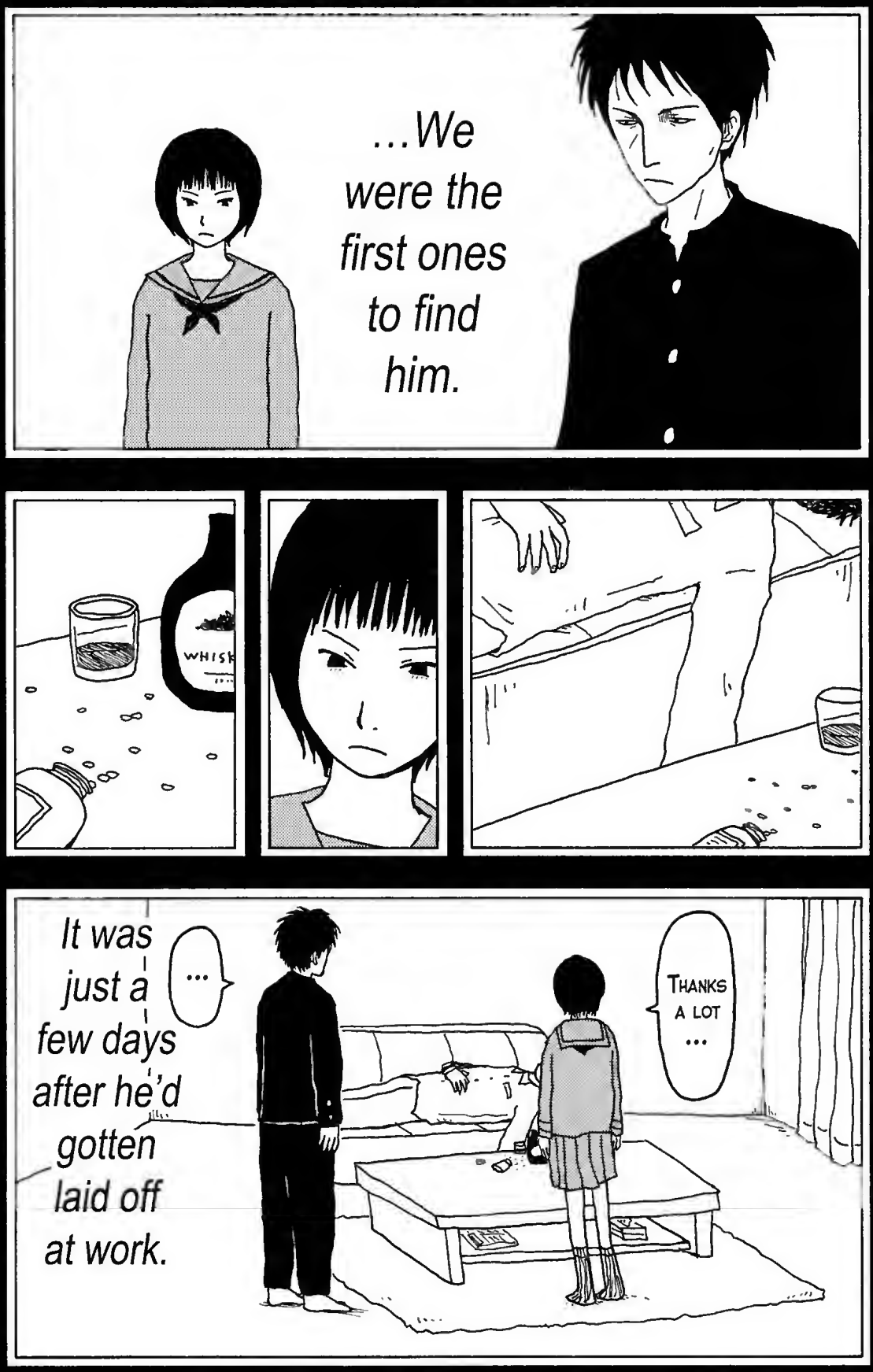
Back then...

Yukako (16)
GUESS WHAT?
HEY...
...
MISFITS WHO STAY HOME ALL DAY ARE CALLED "SHUT-INS" THESE DAYS.
KLIK
KLIK
THEY HAVE A NAME FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU, YOU KNOW.
...

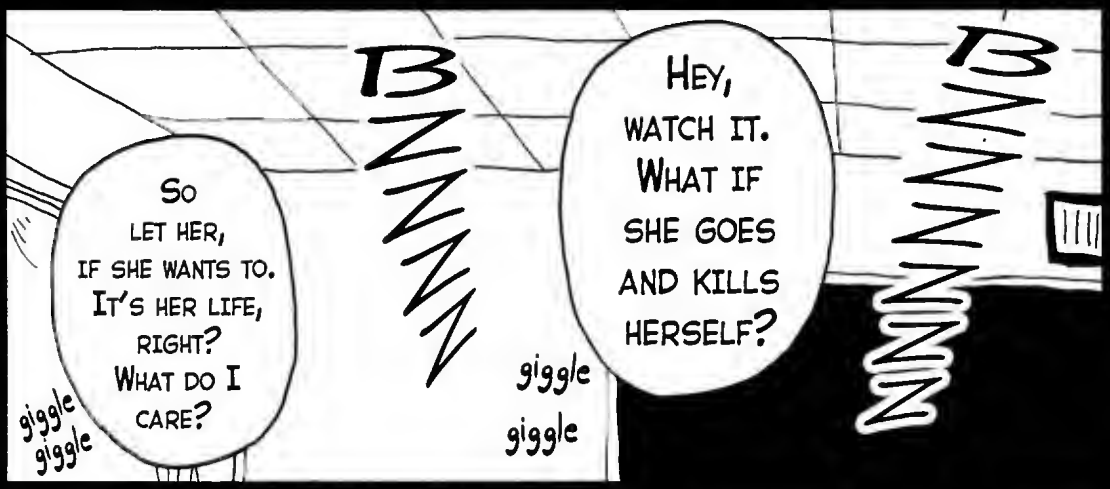

Shuichi (18)
...
YOU LOSER.
...
KLIK KLIK KLIK
HOW DO YOU LIVE WITH YOURSELF? I MEAN...
And that signals the start of the second half.
WEEEEEE
SO NOW YOU SIT IN YOUR ROOM ALL DAY PLAYING VIDEO GAMES.
I'll kill you...
...THAT THEY KICK YOUR ASS OUT OF THERE...
YOU GET INTO SO MANY FIGHTS AT SCHOOL...

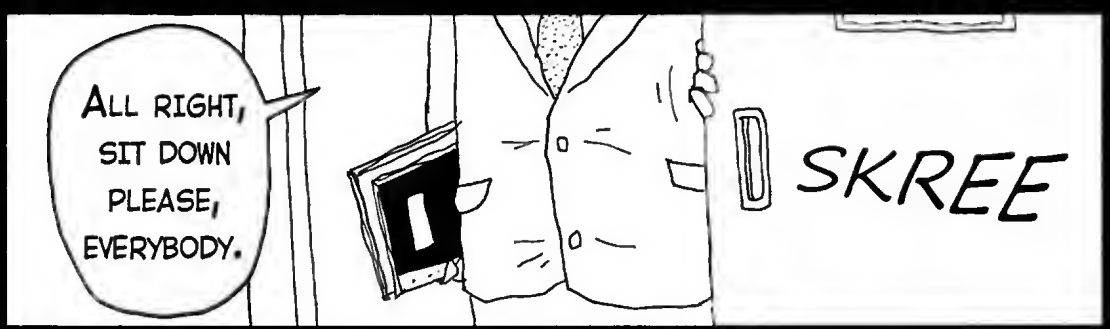
WHAT'S THE DEAL, YOU DEAF?
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE?
...
KLIK KLIK KLIK
...
AAAAAAAAA!!!
5-0
...
KLIK KLIK KLIK


YOU ARE SO TOTALLY PATHETIC, I SWEAR...
GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL
...
YAK YAK
HUB BUB
That day...
...DAD?

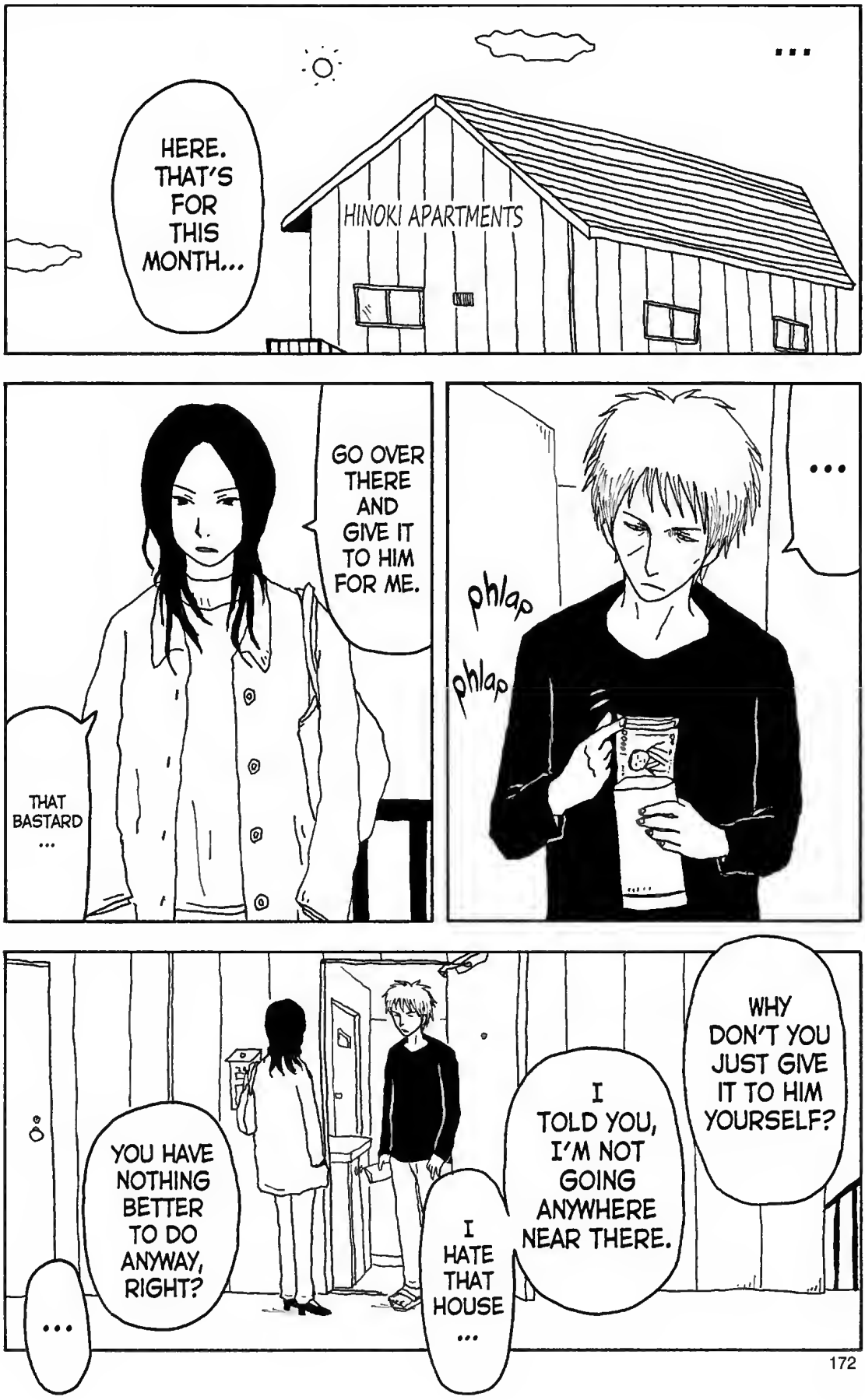

...We were the first ones to find him.
WHISK
It was just a few days after he'd gotten laid off at work.
...
THANKS A LOT ...

I guess my dad...
...wasn't tough enough to take it.
And neither was my brother ...
pwok
Oops! It hit her right on the head!
tee
hee
You are such a good shot!
Except... she didn't even move?
giggle
giggle
...
Maybe she's dead or something.
ha
ha
ha

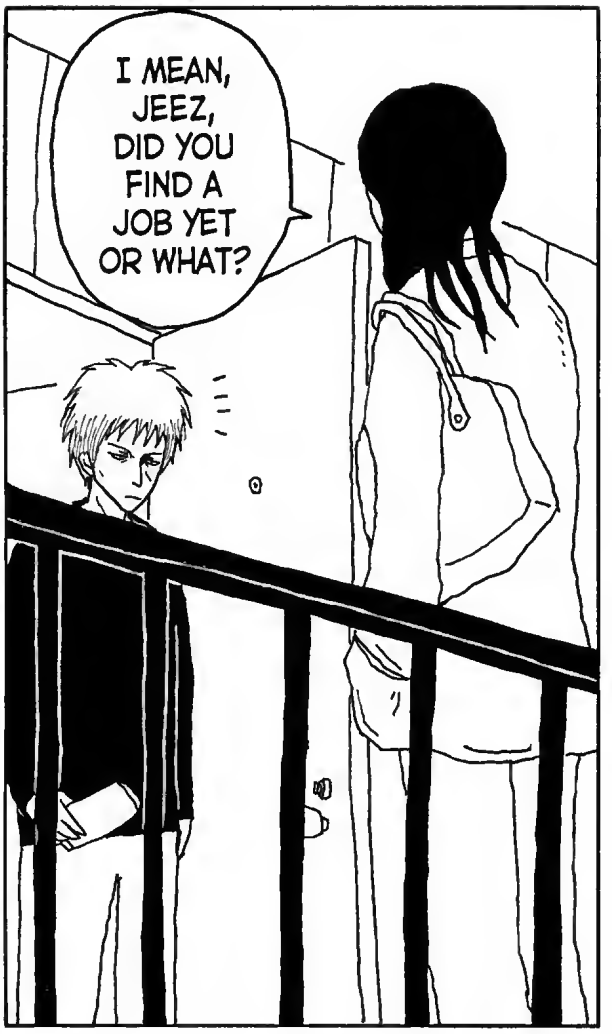

BNNNN
So let her, if she wants to. It's her life, right? What do I care?
giggle giggle
giggle giggle
Hey, watch it. What if she goes and kills herself?
BNNNNNN



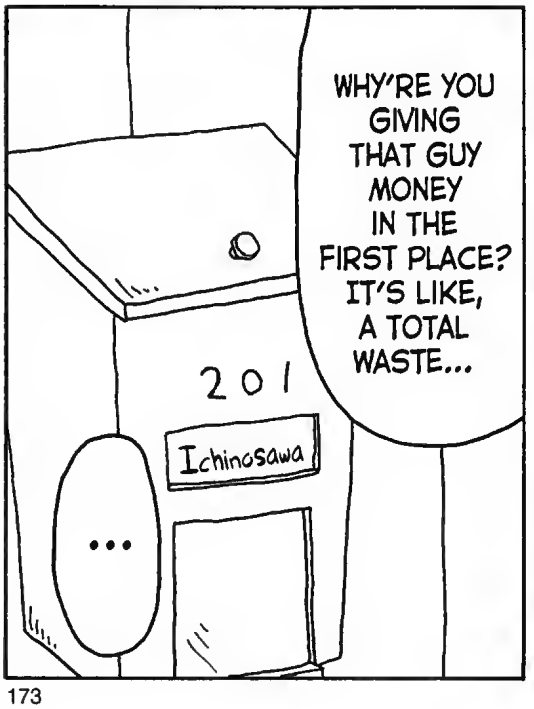
But I did think the people around me were all really lame and stupid...


HERE. THAT'S FOR THIS MONTH...
HINOKI APARTMENTS
...
GO OVER THERE AND GIVE IT TO HIM FOR ME.
THAT BASTARD ...
phlap
phlap
...
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE IT TO HIM YOURSELF?
I TOLD YOU, I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE NEAR THERE.
I HATE THAT HOUSE ...
YOU HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO ANYWAY, RIGHT?
...

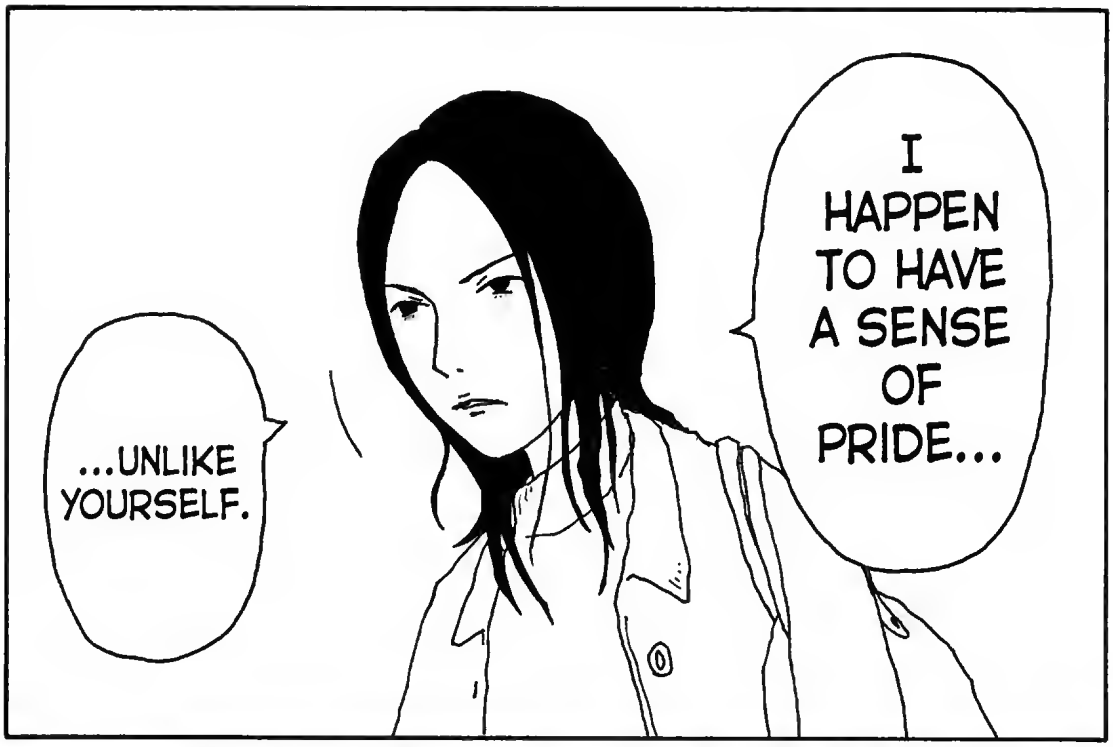
PUB CLUB
Dom Dom
OPEN
PUB CLUB
Dom Dom
¥3,000
All Hours
YEAH... I DID, ACTUALLY.
I'M STARTING AT THIS NIGHTCLUB TOMORROW
...
Just part-time, but still...

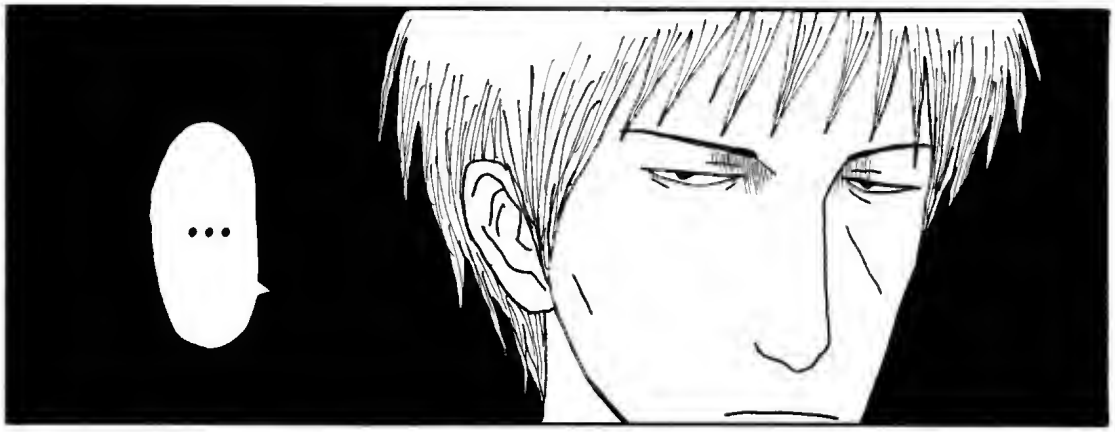

I MEAN, JEEZ, DID YOU FIND A JOB YET OR WHAT?

BET YOU WON'T LAST VERY LONG THERE EITHER.
YOU NEVER DO ANYWHERE
...

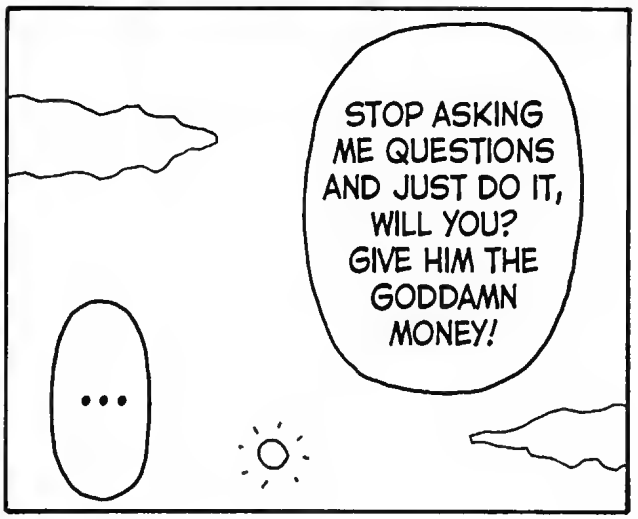

WHY'RE YOU GIVING THAT GUY MONEY IN THE FIRST PLACE? IT'S LIKE, A TOTAL WASTE...
201
Ichinosawa
...

HEY
...
COME ON...



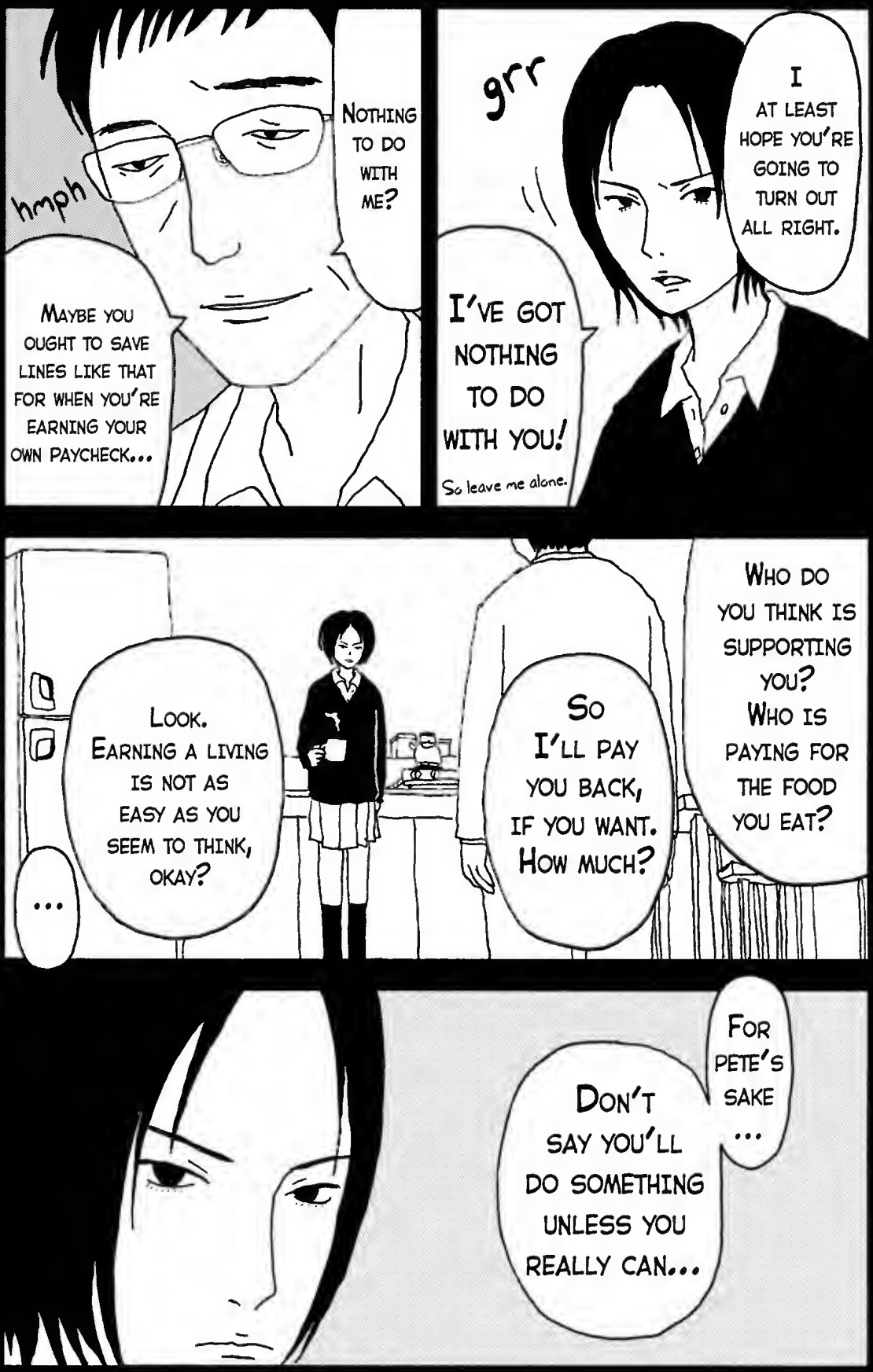


A few years after my dad died...

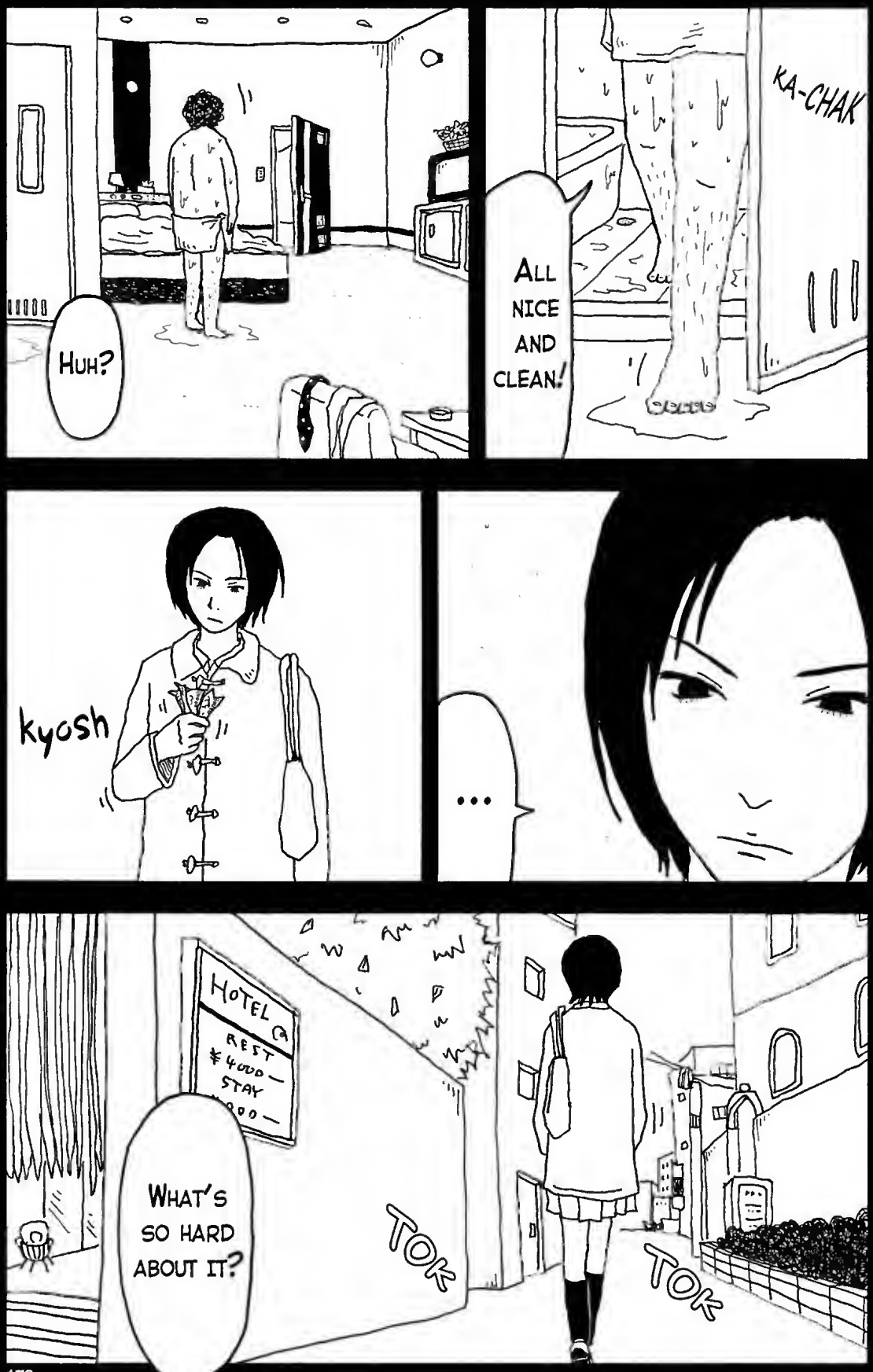


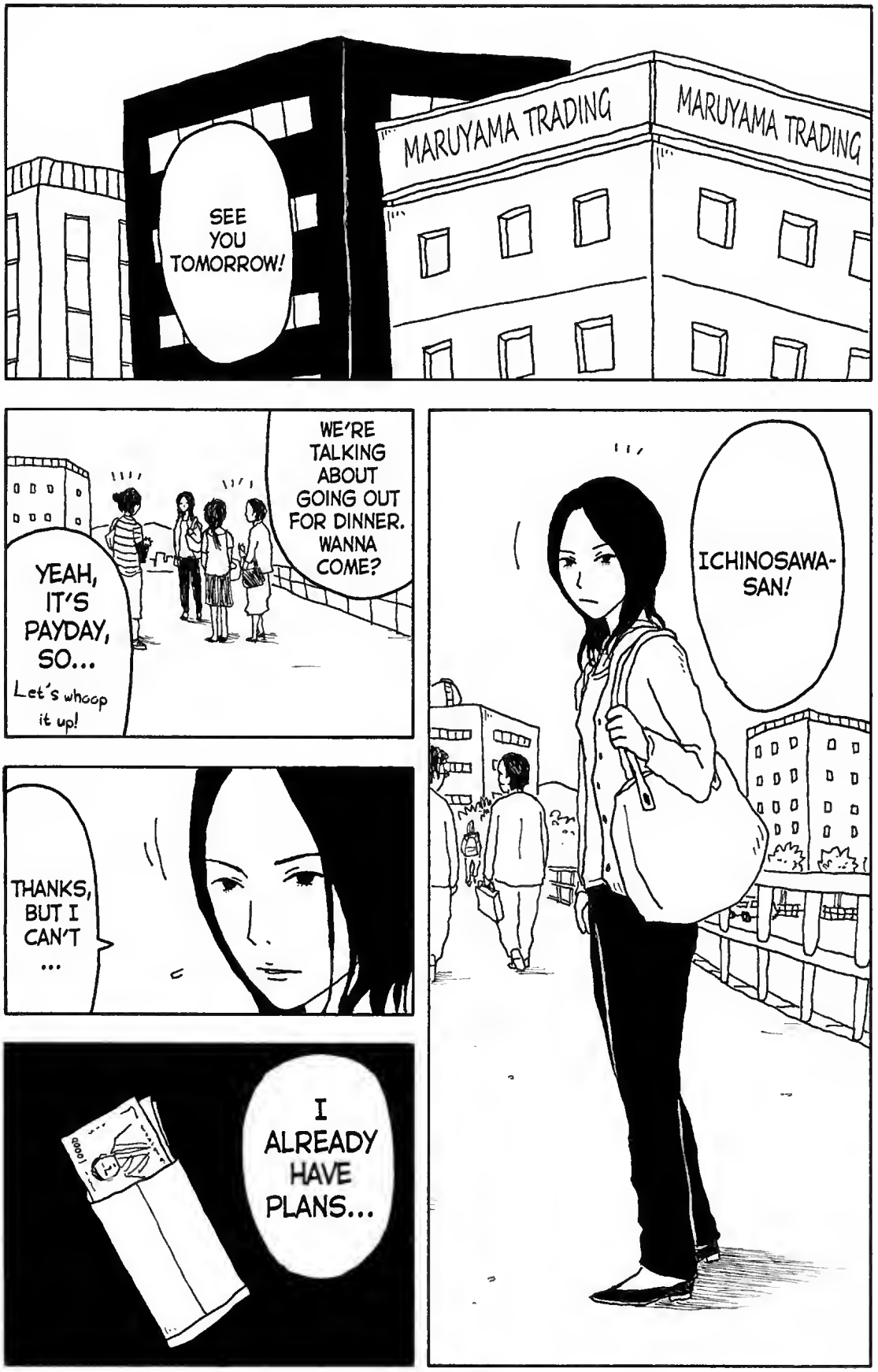
...he came to live with us. The bastard.
LET'S JUST LEAVE HIM BE FOR A WHILE, WHY DON'T WE?
IT COULD BE THAT HE NEEDS TO SPEND SOME TIME DOING NOTHING...
...
KLIK KLIK
I'M SURE SHUICHI WILL GET OVER THIS AND BE HIMSELF AGAIN EVENTUALLY.
HE'LL BE FINE.
BUT ...
LET'S JUST GIVE HIM SOME MORE TIME. NO NEED TO FORCE HIM OUT INTO THE WORLD JUST YET...
...
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT ...

HM?
...IS YOUR MOTHER OUT SHOPPING OR SOMETHING?
I'M HOME.
...
drib
drib
...
I REALLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT BROTHER OF YOURS... WHAT IS HE GOING TO DO?
I MEAN, WITH ONLY A MIDDLE SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND NEVER LEAVING HIS ROOM TO BOOT...
...
MY GOD ...


hmph
Nothing to do with me?
Maybe you ought to save lines like that for when you're earning your own paycheck...
grr
I at least hope you're going to turn out all right.
I've got nothing to do with you!
So leave me alone.
...
Look. Earning a living is not as easy as you seem to think, okay?
So I'll pay you back, if you want. How much?
Who do you think is supporting you? Who is paying for the food you eat?
For pete's sake ...
Don't say you'll do something unless you really can...

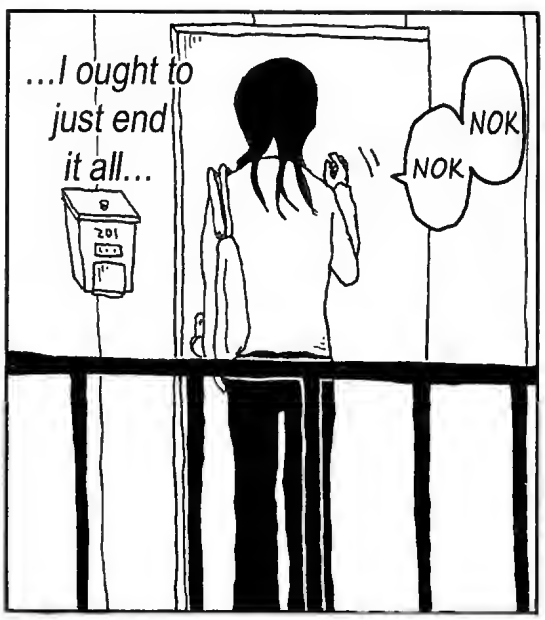
RIGHT ...
HOTEL Q
I PAY YOU IN ADVANCE, RIGHT?
...
HERE YOU GO, THEN. 30,000 YEN*...
* $360.
I'M GONNA GO TAKE A SHOWER ...
WANNA COME WITH ME?
I PREFER TO SHOWER AFTER-WARDS.
OH, OKAY... SO I'LL JUST GO AHEAD, THEN...
shwaa


HUH?
KA-CHAK
ALL NICE AND CLEAN!
kyosh
...
HOTEL
REST ¥4000—
STAY
WHAT'S SO HARD ABOUT IT?
TOK
TOK

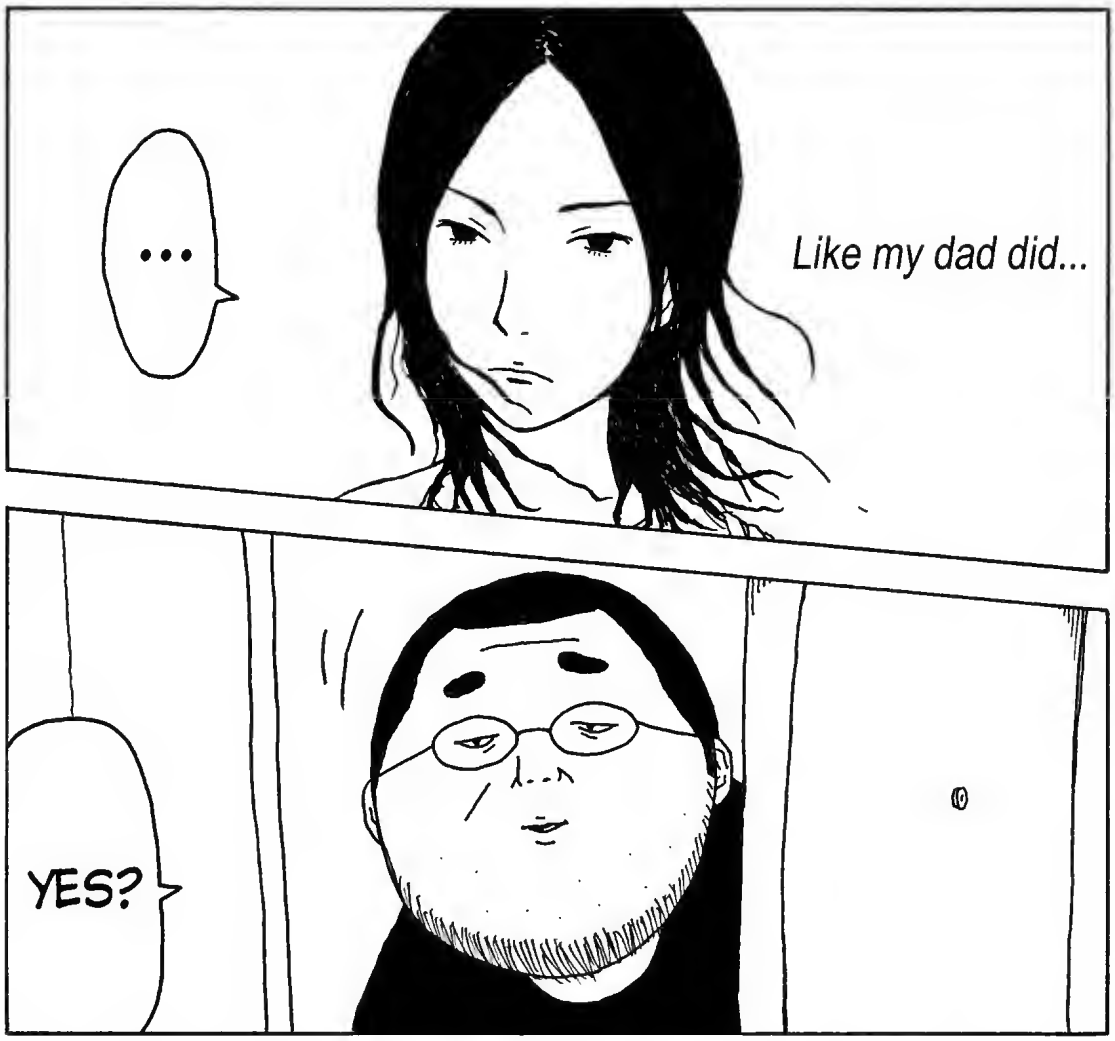

MARUYAMA TRADING
MARUYAMA TRADING
SEE YOU TOMORROW!
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT GOING OUT FOR DINNER. WANNA COME?
YEAH, IT'S PAYDAY, SO...
Let's whoop it up!
ICHINOSAWA-SAN!
THANKS, BUT I CAN'T ...
I ALREADY HAVE PLANS...

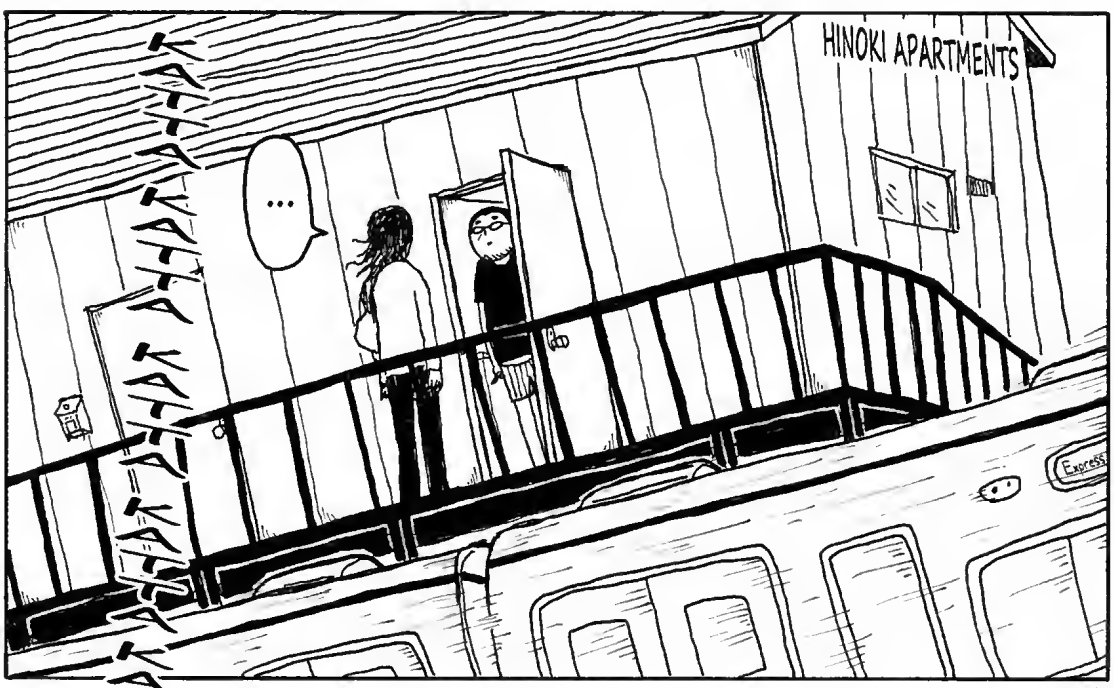
To be perfectly honest...
TOK
TOK
...sometimes I don't know anymore.

What do I want...
...to do with my life?


...I ought to just end it all...
NOK
NOK

Maybe...
TOK
TOK

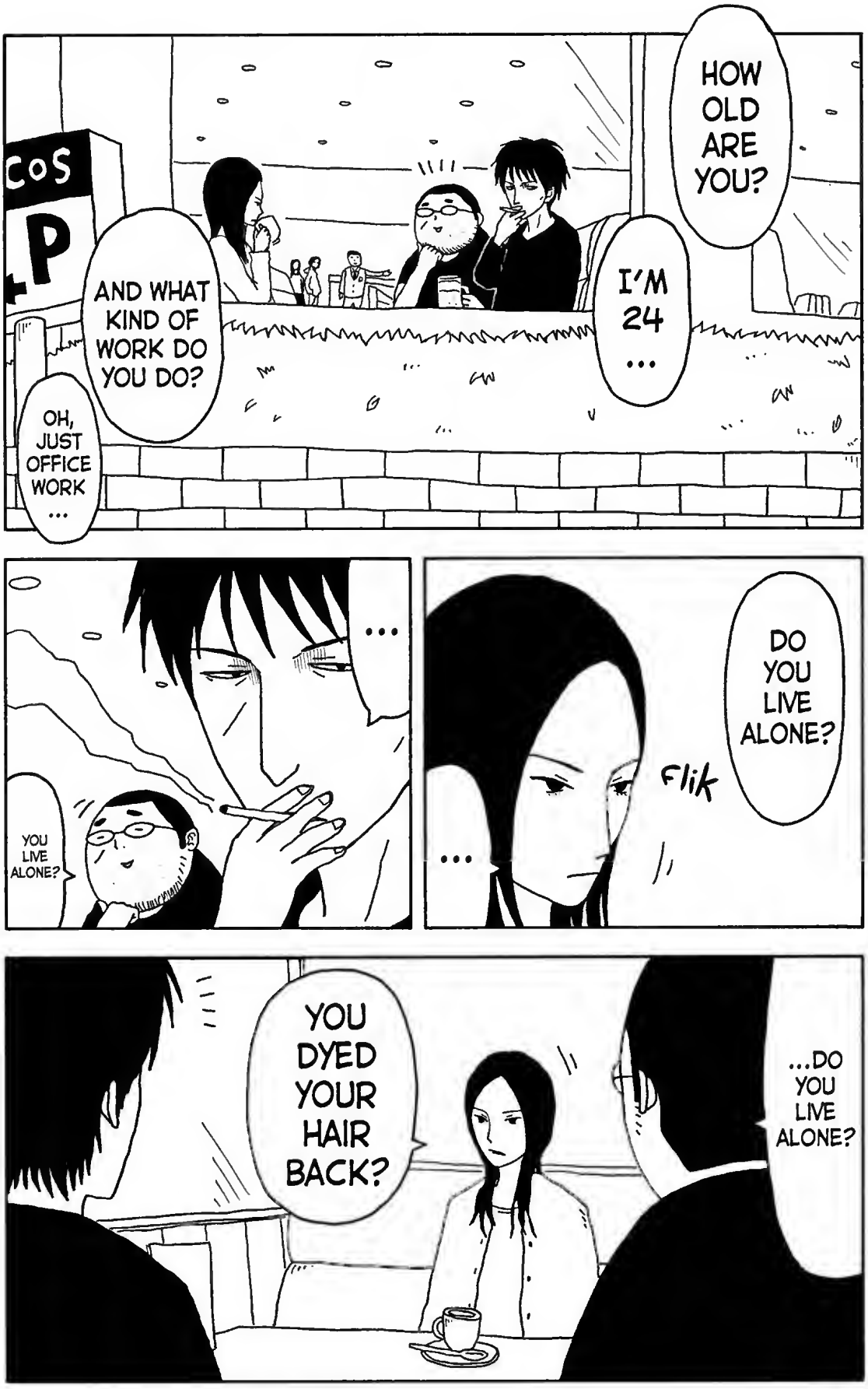

...
Like my dad did...
YES?


HINOKI APARTMENTS
...
KATTA KATTA KATTA KATTA KATTA

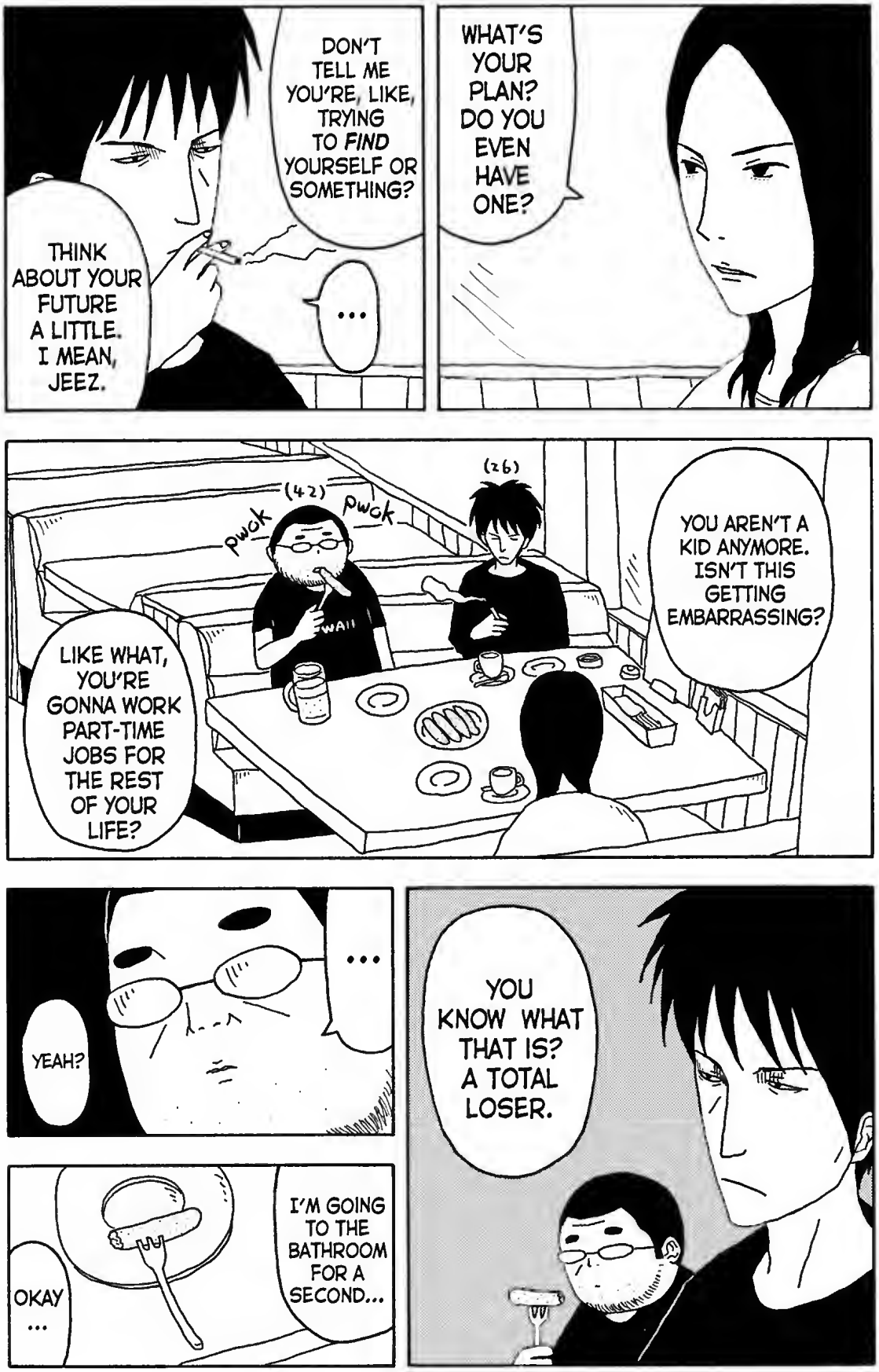
Bonus Chapter:

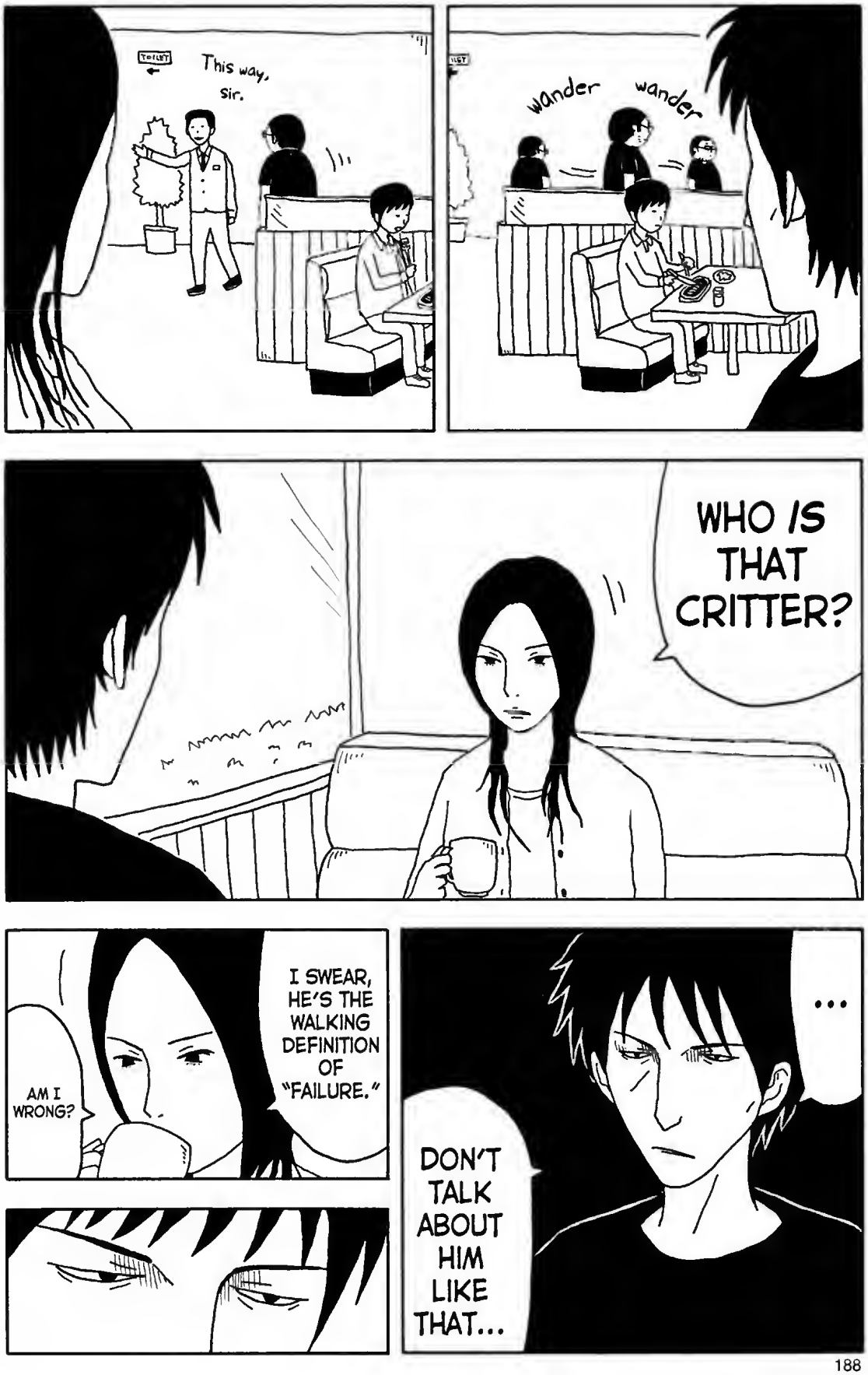
Back Then Part 2

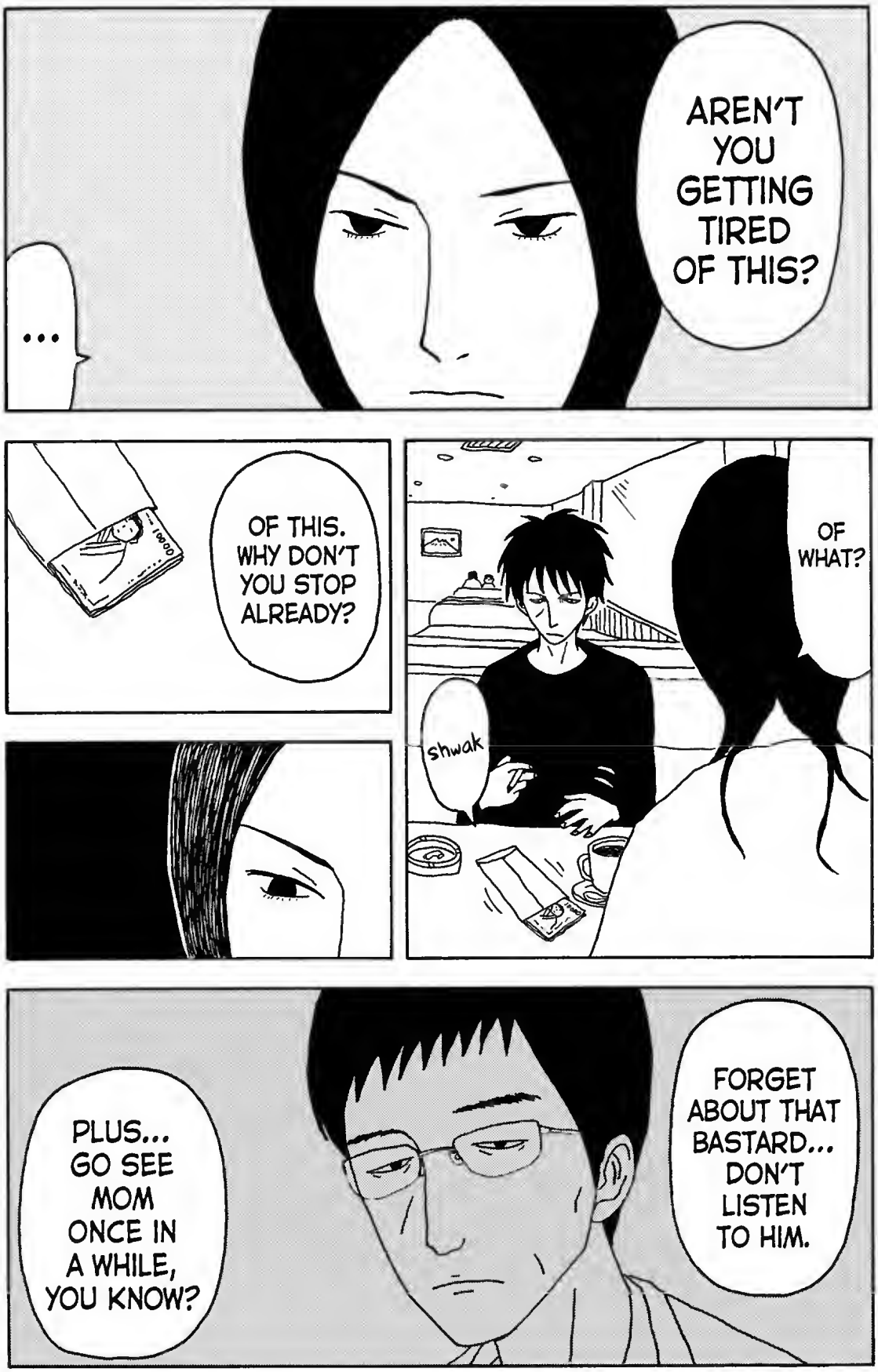
SO YOU'RE SHUICHI'S SISTER...

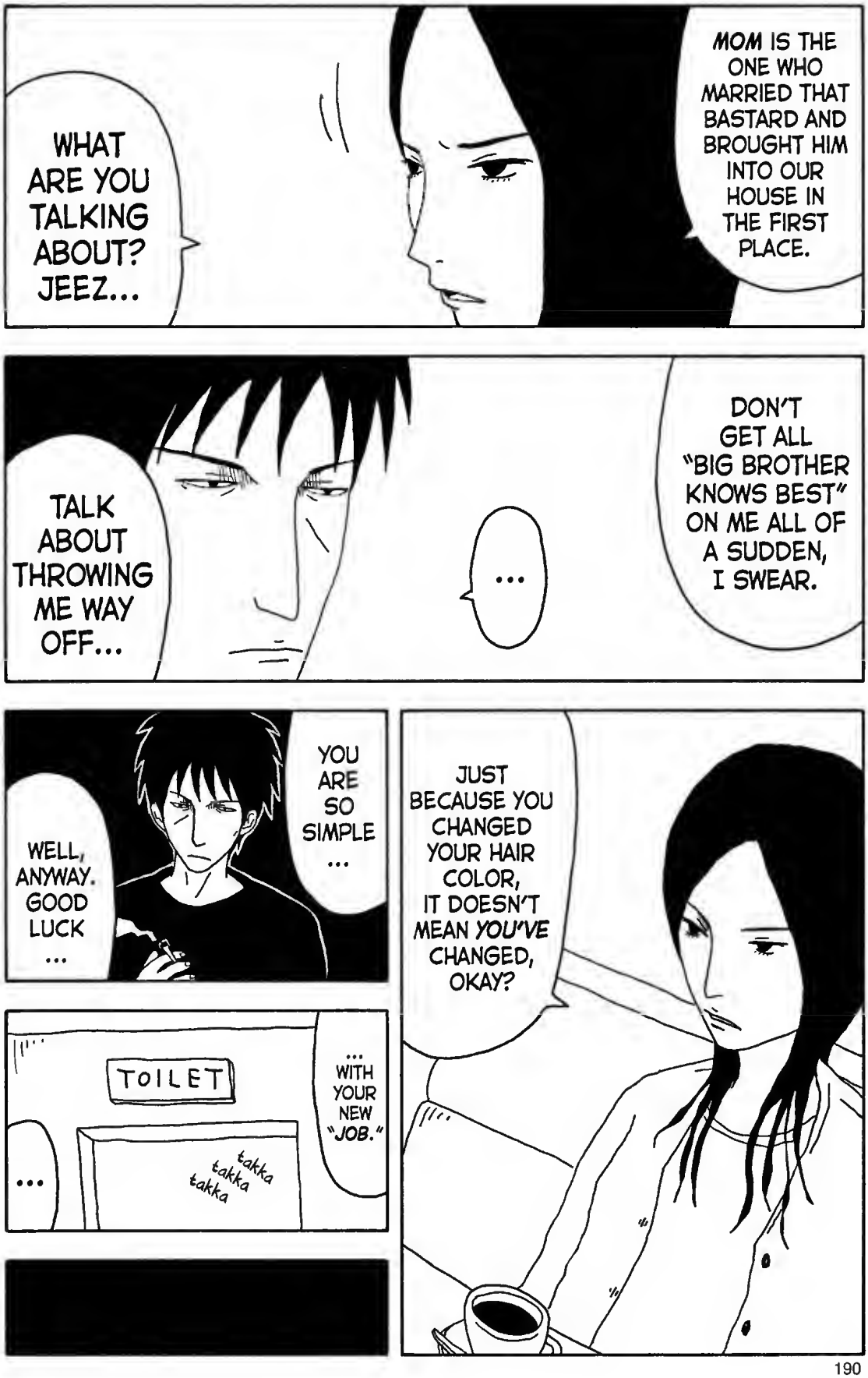

COS
P
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
I'M 24 ...
AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO?
OH, JUST OFFICE WORK ...
...
YOU LIVE ALONE?
DO YOU LIVE ALONE?
Flik
...
YOU DYED YOUR HAIR BACK?
...DO YOU LIVE ALONE?

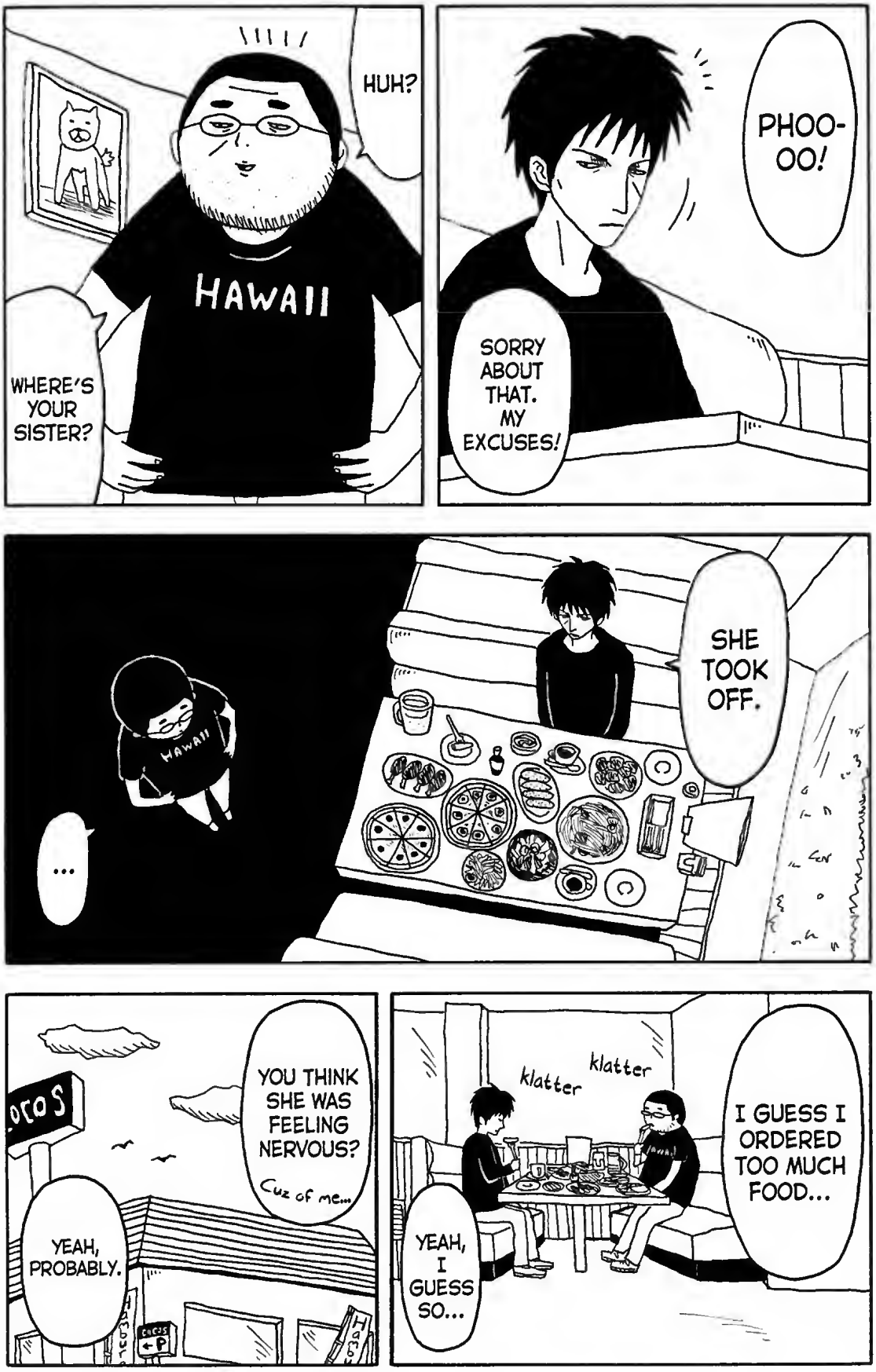
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.
HERE'S THE SAUSAGE PLATTER YOU ORDERED.
YEAH ...
...
AH!
HERE WE GO!
THE TWO OF YOU GO AHEAD AND EAT TOO, OKAY? PLEASE! DON'T BE POLITE!
I'VE ORDERED LOTS OF OTHER STUFF TOO.
Whoever invented sausages is a real genius, huh?
IT'S ALL ON ME TODAY, SO REALLY!
After all, I'm the oldest one here.
WHAT ...
OH ...
Him...
HAWAII
EH?
Hey, you?
HEY, YOU ...


DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE, LIKE, TRYING TO *FIND* YOURSELF OR SOMETHING?
THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE A LITTLE. I MEAN, JEEZ.
...
WHAT'S YOUR PLAN? DO YOU EVEN HAVE ONE?
(42)
pwok
pwok
(26)
YOU AREN'T A KID ANYMORE. ISN'T THIS GETTING EMBARRASSING?
LIKE WHAT, YOU'RE GONNA WORK PART-TIME JOBS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?
...
YEAH?
I'M GOING TO THE BATHROOM FOR A SECOND...
OKAY ...
YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS? A TOTAL LOSER.


TOILET
This way, sir.
wander wander
WHO IS THAT CRITTER?
I SWEAR, HE'S THE WALKING DEFINITION OF "FAILURE."
AM I WRONG?
...
DON'T TALK ABOUT HIM LIKE THAT...

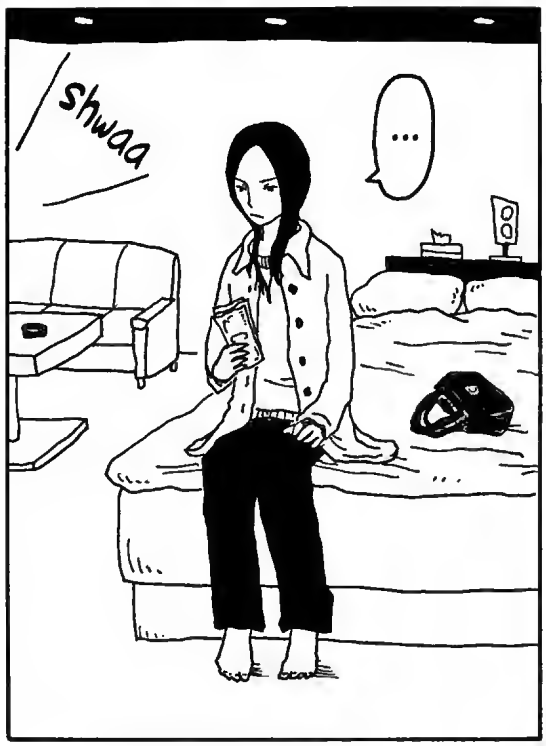

...
AREN'T YOU GETTING TIRED OF THIS?
OF THIS. WHY DON'T YOU STOP ALREADY?
OF WHAT?
shwak
FORGET ABOUT THAT BASTARD... DON'T LISTEN TO HIM.
PLUS... GO SEE MOM ONCE IN A WHILE, YOU KNOW?


WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? JEEZ...
MOM IS THE ONE WHO MARRIED THAT BASTARD AND BROUGHT HIM INTO OUR HOUSE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
TALK ABOUT THROWING ME WAY OFF...
...
DON'T GET ALL "BIG BROTHER KNOWS BEST" ON ME ALL OF A SUDDEN, I SWEAR.
WELL, ANYWAY. GOOD LUCK ...
YOU ARE SO SIMPLE ...
JUST BECAUSE YOU CHANGED YOUR HAIR COLOR, IT DOESN'T MEAN *YOU'VE* CHANGED, OKAY?
TOILET
takka takka takka
...
... WITH YOUR NEW "*JOB*."


HUH?
HAWAII
WHERE'S YOUR SISTER?
PHOO-OO!
SORRY ABOUT THAT. MY EXCUSES!
SHE TOOK OFF.
...
YOU THINK SHE WAS FEELING NERVOUS?
Cuz of me...
YEAH, PROBABLY.
klatter
klatter
I GUESS I ORDERED TOO MUCH FOOD...
YEAH, I GUESS SO...

HOTEL NIPPON
HOTE
OKAY ...
THEN I'LL GO AHEAD AND SHOWER FIRST.

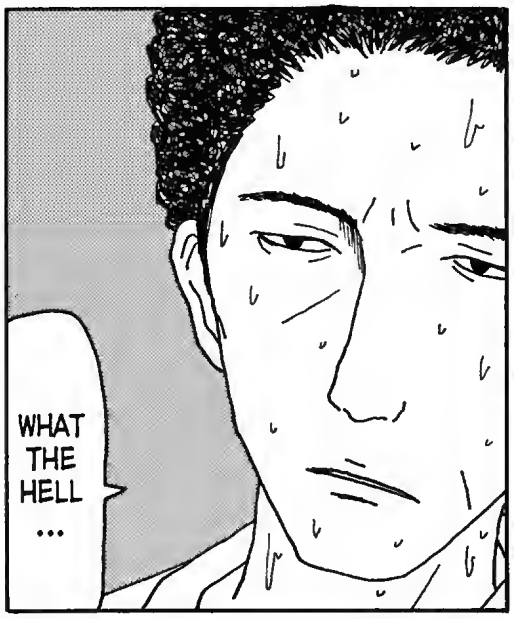
shwaa
Aren't you...


shwaa
...

...getting tired of this?

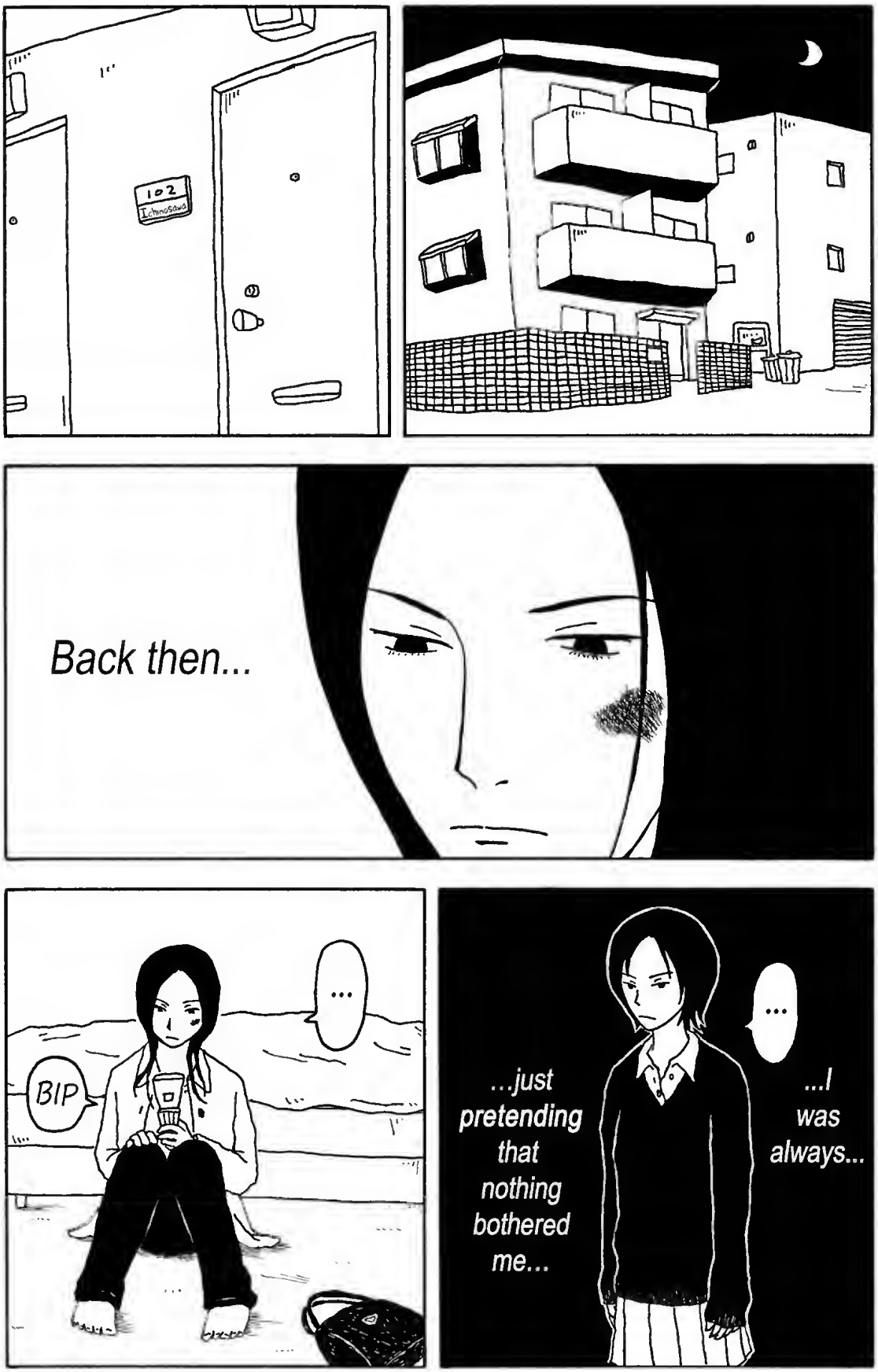
...
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
TOK
?
KLAMP
YOU JUST TAKE MY MONEY AND WALK OUT?
hanh
hanh
...
WAIT A MINUTE ...

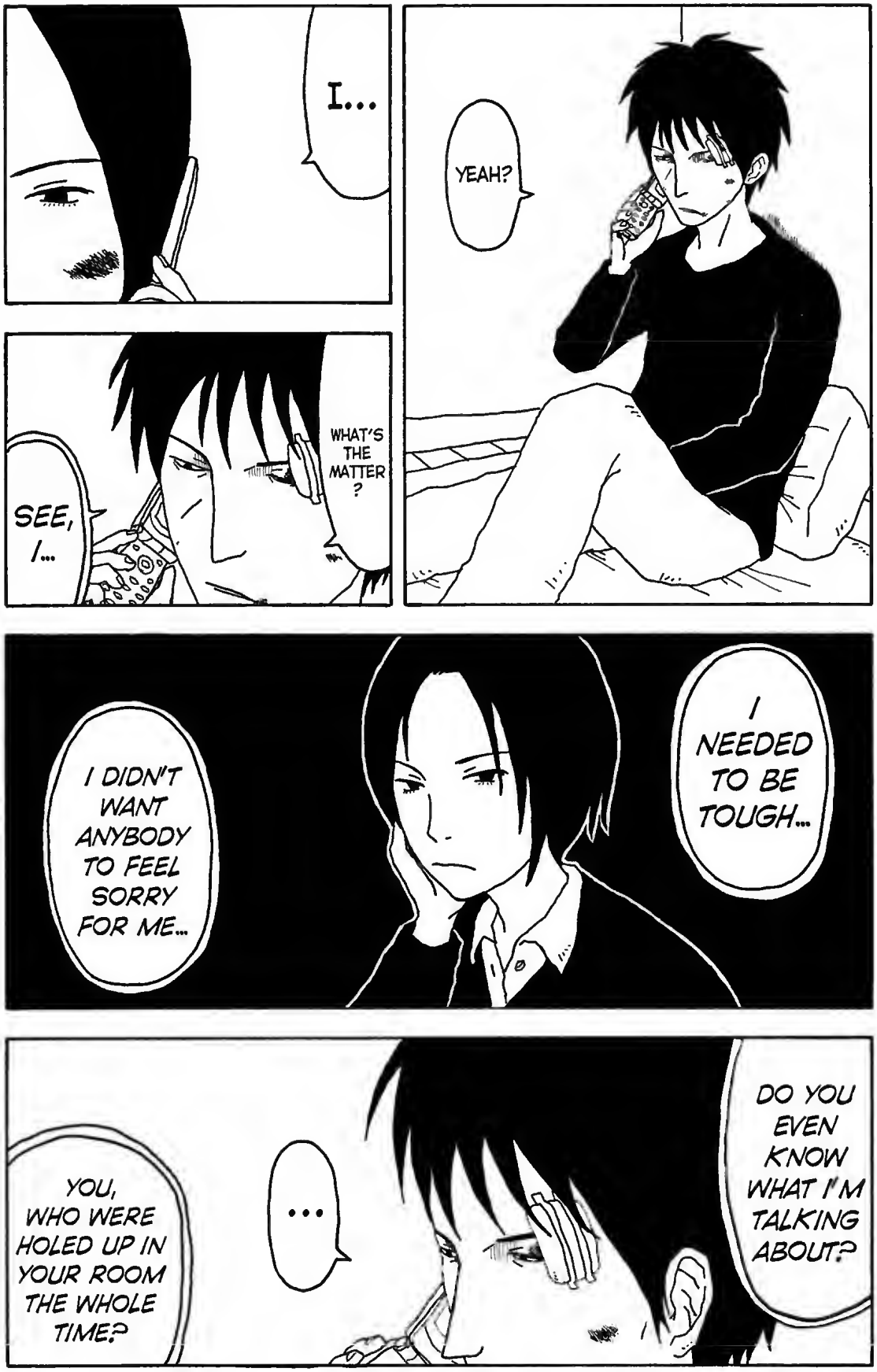
IS THIS WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO?
...AND WHAT IF IT WAS?
MAN, YOU ARE THE LOWEST OF THE LOW.


WHAT THE HELL ...

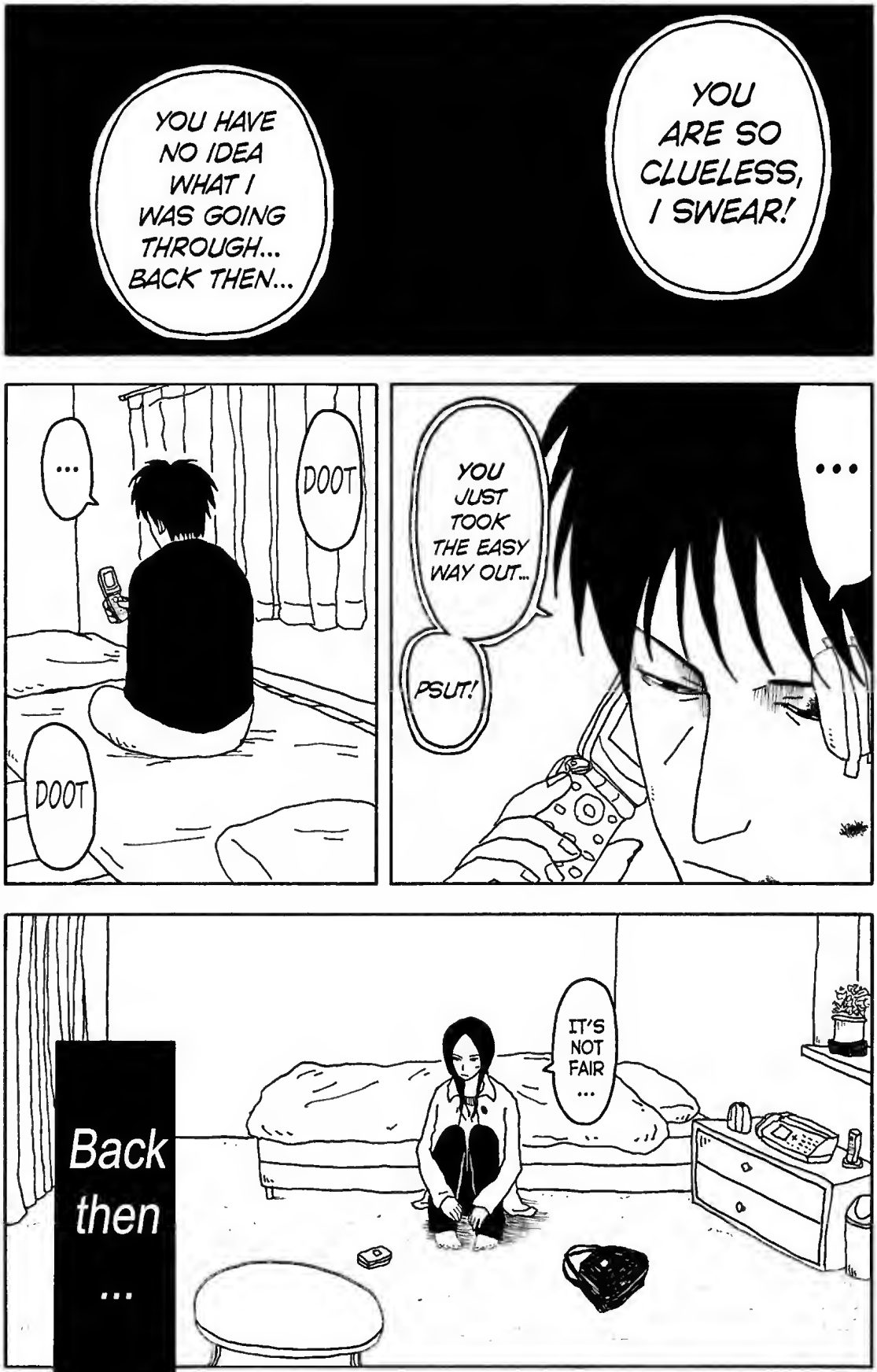
OH YEAH, LIKE YOU CAN TALK.

PWAK
YOU BITCH!


102
Ichinosawa
Back then...
BIP
...
...
...I was always...
...just pretending that nothing bothered me...


I...
YEAH?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
SEE, I...
I NEEDED TO BE TOUGH...
I DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME...
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT?
...
YOU, WHO WERE HOLED UP IN YOUR ROOM THE WHOLE TIME?

HEY...
...
...
WOULD YOU BE SAD IF I DIED?
... YOU'RE GOING TO DIE?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?
YOU KNOW, YOU REALLY PISS ME OFF!


YOU ARE SO CLUELESS, I SWEAR!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH... BACK THEN...
...
DOOT
DOOT
...
YOU JUST TOOK THE EASY WAY OUT...
PSUT!
Back then ...
IT'S NOT FAIR ...

…I was really, really, really sad.

Actually...

I sure was not ready to accept a new father yet...

I was hurt, and angry, and feeling like a total reject...

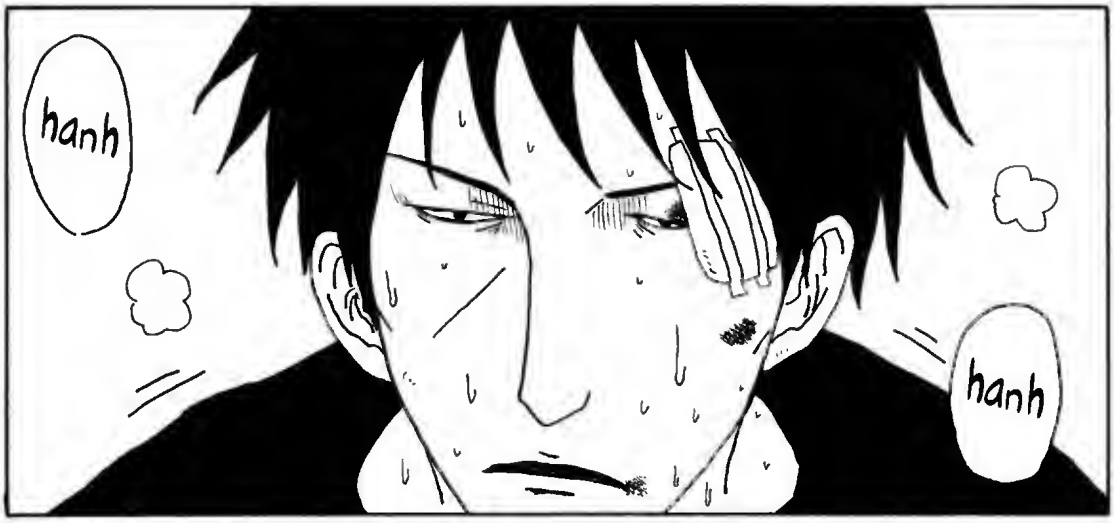
But...

I wanted somebody to notice how I felt...

…I thought if you cried, that meant you were weak.

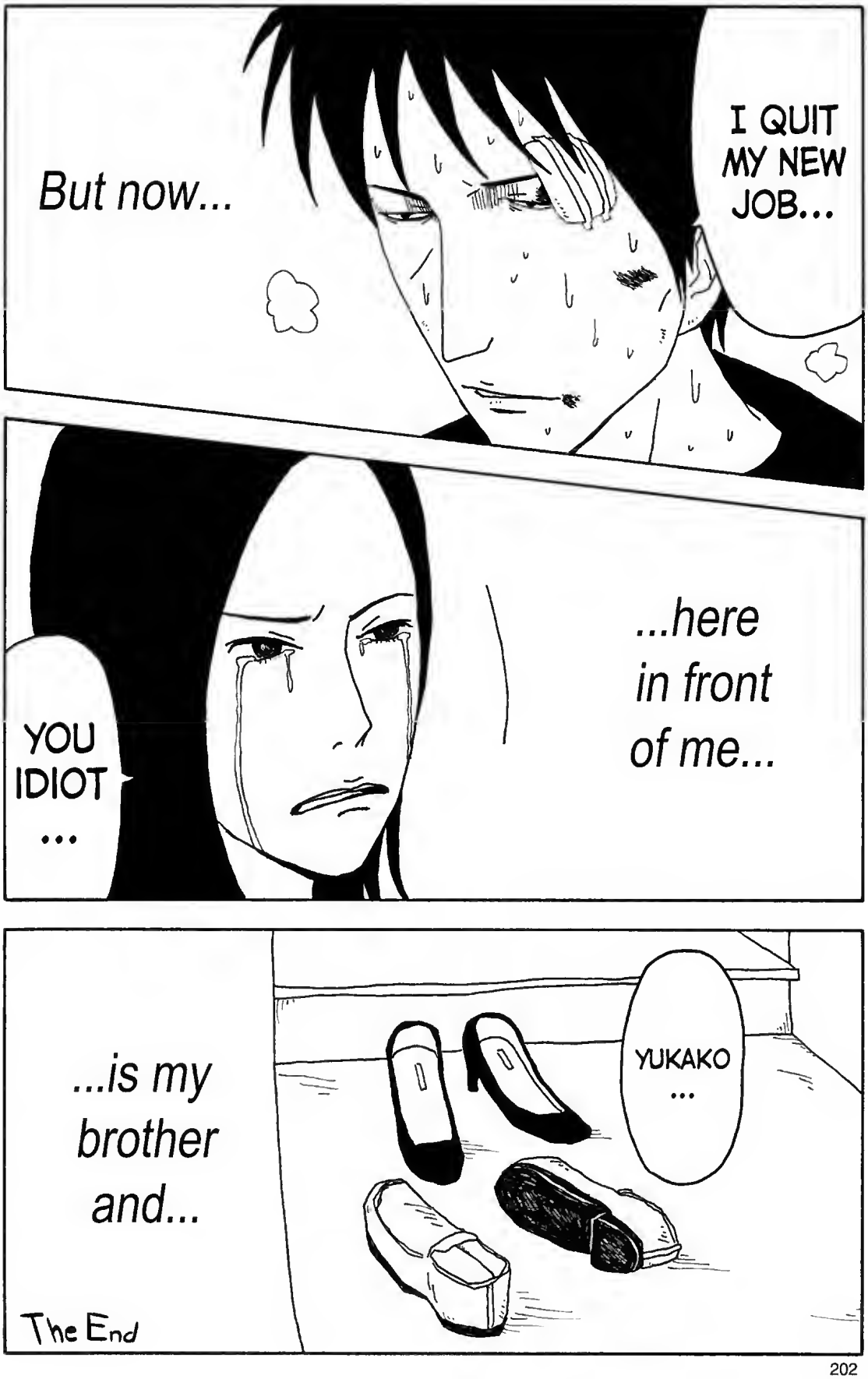
Back then...

LOCK YOUR FRONT DOOR AT LEAST. JEEZ...



All I was doing was cutting myself off.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?


But now...
I QUIT MY NEW JOB...
...here in front of me...
YOU IDIOT ...
...is my brother and...
YUKAKO ...
The End

extra: Letters Corner

Pretty interesting. I give it a 70. (Self-employed, age 36)
AONO: I'll try hard to get a 200 from you next time!

I found it in my dad's bookshelf. (Female student, age 17)
AONO: Your father is a splendid man.

You think any fool can draw manga, don't you? (College student, age 19)
AONO: No, I don't.

Good luck in the homestretch, Sensei. (Editor, age 34)
AONO: Huh...?! Uh...thanks!

Not enough battle scenes. (Grade school student, age 12)
AONO: I'll think about it.

Try to get serious. (High school student, age 18)
AONO: I'm being serious.

What do you think you're doing? (Company executive, age 48)
AONO: Meaning...?

How long do you plan to have that attitude? (Salesperson, age 23)
AONO: What kind of attitude?

I couldn't relate to any of the characters. (Business owner, age 31)
AONO: I'll try harder.

Reading your manga cheers me up. (Friend, age 42)
AONO: Thank you...

Give me back the 620 yen I paid. (College student, age 19)
AONO: I'll discuss it with my father.

I was reading it in the bath and it got all crinkled, so I threw it out. (Office lady, age 28)
AONO: Thank you for reading it.

I'm glad I only browsed it at a manga cafe. (White-collar worker, age 25)
AONO: Meaning...?

You don't qualify as a manga artist!! (College student, age 19)
AONO: I'll keep trying hard to qualify.

You shouldn't give up. (Teacher, age 48)
AONO: I haven't given up.

Congratulations on winning the Shogakukan Manga Award!! (Company employee, age 32)
AONO: I haven't won it.

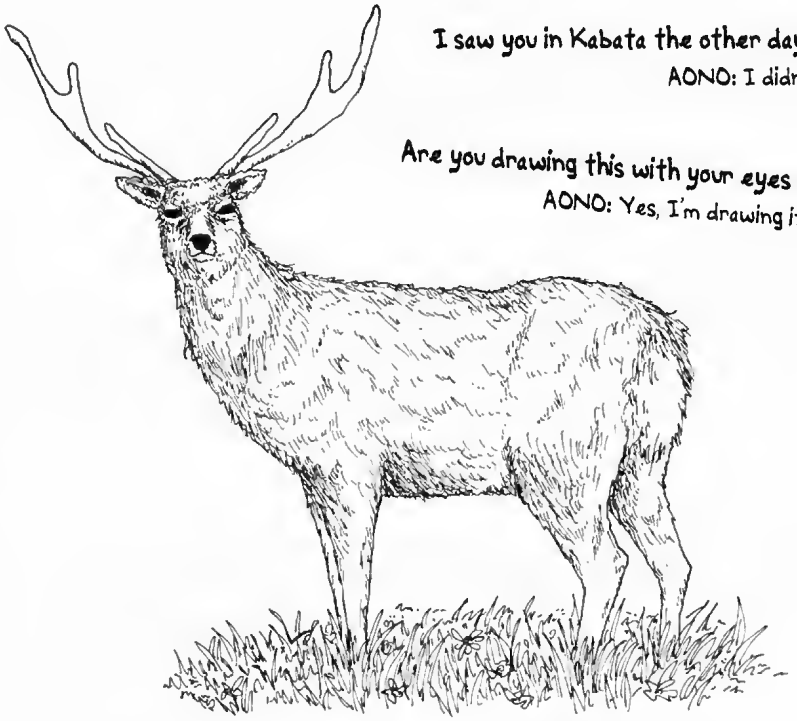
Have you changed your email address? (Friend, age 42)
AONO: No.

I believe that manga as an art form still has a lot of untapped potential and that new forms of expression should continue to be pursued. However, I also believe that for this to happen, sincerity and seriousness on the part of the manga artist is essential. What I mean by that is.../rest omitted/. (Freelancer, age 37)
AONO: You're exactly right!

It made me cry. (Father, age 72)
AONO: ...

Shizuo is so hot! (Bride-to-be, age 37)
AONO: Hmm...

Please let me be your assistant. (Unemployed, age 63)
AONO: I'll be in touch.



I saw you in Kabata the other day. (Temp agency worker, age 39)
AONO: I didn't go there.

Are you drawing this with your eyes closed? (College student, age 19)
AONO: Yes, I'm drawing it with my eyes closed.

*All the letters and comments in this corner are fictional.

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL...TOMORROW

Volume 2

VIZ Signature Edition

Story & Art by SHUNJU AONO

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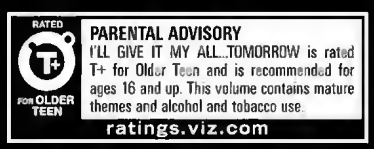
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